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Snow Angel coral bells

Cover photo courtesy Winger Photography, LLC

Colorado Green



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Published by ALCC for the green industry
in the Rocky Mountain region

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Native Edge Landscapes, Boulder

Vice President • Will Pereira, BrightView, Parker

Secretary/Treasurer • Nate Caldwell, Foothills
Landscape Maintenance, Fort Collins

Past President • Kelly Gouge, Swingle Lawn,
Tree and Landscape Care, Denver

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Trends for 2016


Outdoor living is exploding! Each year brings a dizzying array of new outdoor features and products. In this department, look for original ideas, tips and details provided by emerging and established design/contractor teams here in Colorado to help you develop spectacular outdoor living spaces.

Check zoning code and building permits. Local government is developing more stringent zoning (what can go where) and building (how it should it be built) code about outdoor living elements. Some municipalities also require drainage plans when impervious surfaces increase. Code protects owners from fly by night contractors, while providing contractors with a mechanism to limit construction liability potential.

Quality design comes before trends. Meaningful, comfortable and safe spaces reflecting the client's goals remain the crux of the design effort. Thoughtful grading, sculpting the site while maintaining appropriate site drainage, is a trademark of superior landscape design. Does the circulation work? Is it easy and efficient to get from one space to another? How do patios and decks accommodate proposed uses? Is the planting design sensitive to microclimates? Are details thoughtfully resolved?

Style counts! Currently popular, the clean feeling of modernism is actually a formal approach. Minimal detail means every mistake shows; make sure single species plant groupings are all in the same growing conditions for consistent performance. Outdoor living spaces for historic properties can adapt to a contemporary feel, remain consistent to the house, or blend traditional and new elements to create an eclectic blend.

Here (photo above), the homeowner wanted a richly layered outdoor living space, consistent with interior that includes furnishings from around the world. The design featured stucco vertical surfaces, matching the house, adding clay paver bands consistent with the floor detail. Floors were designed with a blend of buff and chocolate flagstone bordered by the clay pavers. The custom pergola and handrail include powder coat steel "vines". Working with trades to create custom details can be a rewarding approach. Alternatively, suppliers offer an increasing range of "off-the-shelf" materials, extending our design range.

Now is a fabulous time to be in the landscape industry if creative approaches inspire you. Do your research, stay true to the basics and extend your reach. Read this column for inspiration. Create incredible, fresh projects. Reach out to our editorial team to share your successes: we are seeking innovative ideas to feature here as we explore trends for 2016 and beyond. Happy landscaping! 

—Contributed by Wendy Booth,
Ivy Street Design Group, Inc.



Photo courtesy Ivy Street Design

Style counts! Currently popular, the clean feeling of modernism is actually a formal approach.

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Fefes honored with L&L Leadership Award

Kristen Fefes, ALCC's executive director was named a winner of the Lawn & Landscape prestigious Leadership Award. Fefes was one of four recipients for this year's award, which honors green industry professionals who have gone above and beyond in their dedication to their field.

Fefes has served as executive director since 2001 and has gained the respect and admiration of coworkers, board members and association members alike. Her emphasis is on teamwork and two-way communication. "It's not about one person's agenda," she says. She adds that in associations, "shareholders, customers and the workforce are all the same people. Nobody in my position can do their job without the membership." Fefes acknowledges that she wouldn't want to do her job without them. Listening is how Fefes learns. Coworkers say she is equally attentive to the leader of a huge company as she is to a young person getting started in the industry.

Advocacy is a key part of Fefes' role for both the association and the industry as a whole. "It's [my] job to advocate for the industry and represent them" she says. She lobbies at the state-house, travels to Washington most years, and is part of GreenCO, the Colorado organization that brings together seven green industries as well as ProGreen EXPO.

"She's on my short list of people I'd trust with anything," says Dean Murphy, president of Terracare Associates and past president of ALCC.



Photo courtesy Lawn & Landscape

Chuck Bowen, editor L&L, Stephanie Schwenke, Syngenta, and award winners Kristen Fefes, ALCC; Bruce Wilson, ValleyCrest and Bruce Wilson & Co.; Mark Utendorf, Emerald Lawn Care, and Chris Davitt, Ruppert Landscape.



JKJ Lawn Sprinkler helps disabled veterans



Photo courtesy Chelcia Peterson Photography

Three generations, Joe DiBlasi at right with son Joe Jr. and grandson Corbyn

Joe DiBlasi, owner, JKJ Lawn Sprinkler, Inc., says he "gets a kick out of surprising fellow veterans with no charge service." When he learned about Homes for Our Troops about eight years ago, he convinced Ewing Distributors to donate the materials and installed his first sprinkler system for a disabled veteran. Since then, he continues to donate time to do sprinkler shutdowns and activations for disabled vets, about 10 or so each spring and fall. Sometimes he donates a sprinkler installation, does repairs or helps with snow shoveling.

For 22 years, DiBlasi served in the Navy on active duty and in the Naval Reserve. During his time he achieved the rank of Chief Petty Officer and says, "That's when I learned to lead and learned the importance of taking care of my people." DiBlasi is a disabled vet himself and is committed to his people after they leave the military. He finds his people in different ways – sometimes by simply noticing a DV license plate and sometimes getting an old vet to open up through conversation.

"I consider myself lucky," his says. "If I can do something for another vet, I do it."

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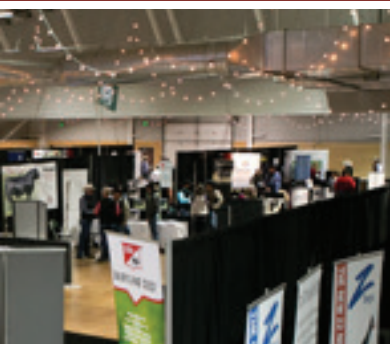


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In memoriam: Lew Hammer, ALCC Founder

Lewis Dale “Lew” Hammer (1928–2015) was remembered by family and friends at a service at First United Methodist Church, Lafayette, on December 10, 2015 following his passing a few days prior.

Hammer’s career in the landscape industry grew out of his college degree in horticulture and he didn’t wait until he was involved in a proper business to begin landscaping. He landscaped an entire air force base on a Pacific island while serving in the US Air Force.

Following military service, Hammer and his wife Suzy moved to Denver where in 1952 he founded Lew Hammer, Inc. Within a decade, the firm was involved in large landscape jobs statewide and by the ‘70s, the firm was a major interstate player installing large and high profile landscape projects.

Lew Hammer, Inc. was the core landscape company that became Randall & Blake, Inc., RBI and most recently, American Civil Constructors. He also founded and later sold REVEX an erosion control company.

Hammer is remembered for his commitment to professionalism both as a businessman and as an industry volunteer. In 1993, his colleague Rick Randall commended him in an article in *Colorado Green* for “formulating a landscape business more like other professional services firms instead of like a gardener running things from his overall pockets.”

Among many achievements, Hammer was among the founders of ALCC, served as its sixth president and was an early recipient of the Bob Cannon Lifetime Achievement Award. Nationally, he was among the first members to belong to the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (now NALP) and in 1975 became the first person from Colorado to serve as its president.



Lew Hammer

Photo courtesy Winger Photography LLC.



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In memoriam: Len Johnson

Leonard L. Johnson, who established L.L. Johnson Distributing Co. in Denver in 1976, recently died at the age of 86. Johnson directed the company's progression from providing mainly feed and seed into power equipment and turf and irrigation supplies covering Colorado, southern Wyoming and parts of Nebraska and other states. Under Johnson's stewardship, the company became known for the professionalism and dedication of its personnel as well as its long-standing customer and vendor relationships. The reins were passed to Johnson's son James who bought the family business in 2005.

Len Johnson attributed the company's success to its people and said, "No company has ever suffered from too much talent."



Len Johnson

Photo courtesy L.L. Johnson Distributing Company

Denise Bassett is new GCC association manager



Denise Bassett

Photo courtesy Garden Centers of Colorado

Denise Bassett was recently introduced as the new association manager for **Garden Centers of Colorado (GCC)**. She has extensive experience in communications, management, membership services, marketing and will actively represent GCC on the ProGreen EXPO board.

Bassett served as administrative assistant to the president of the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Foundation and was director of operations for the Colorado PGA. As a Colorado Master Gardner, Bassett is dedicated to horticulture in the state. She is also an avid golfer.

Horizon store opens in Colorado Springs



Horizon Distributors, Inc. recently opened a store in Colorado Springs. Conveniently accessible from I-25, the new store has a customer friendly layout and plenty of parking. This location is Horizon's second in Colorado and will better serve southern communities with its team of knowledgeable sales and service professionals.

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L&L seeks applications for Top 100 list

Lawn & Landscape (L&L) is gathering data for the 2016 L&L Top 100 list and needs the help of industry companies to collect reliable revenue data. The L&L Top 100, published annually in May and sponsored by Toro, lists the largest landscape companies in North America. L&L is calling on companies to submit their revenue data which will be used to rank the Top 100 companies.

Last year's L&L Top 100 reported that North America's biggest companies (97 in the U.S. and 3 in Canada) earned more than \$8 billion in revenue and employ about 86,000 seasonal plus year-round employees. These numbers reveal the size and importance of the landscape industry in North America.

L&L is already working on this year's list and applications are still being accepted. The deadline for submission is February 12. Find the form online at www.lawnandlandscape.com/top-100.aspx.





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Industry Calendar

Feb. 9-12: ProGreen EXPO,
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Mar. 1-2: CALCP Spring Training
Conference, Ramada Plaza Hotel,
I-25 & 120th Ave,
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Mar. 16 - 19: National Collegiate
Landscape Competition
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GreenCO organizations' 2015 leadership

Colorado's green industry organizations promote the professionalism and interests of their industry segment within the industry and to the public at large. Their successes arise from the volunteer leadership which guides them and upholds their mission. Listed below are the boards of directors of Colorado's GreenCO affiliated organizations.



Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado

President **Becky Hammond**, Native Edge Landscapes
 Vice President **Will Pereira**, BrightView
 Secretary/Treasurer **Nate Caldwell**, Foothills Landscape Maintenance
 Past President **Kelly Gouge**, Swingle Lawn Tree & Landscape Care

At-Large Directors:

Brian Carlson, Green Landscape Solutions
Kurt DeLucero, Arrowhead Landscape Maintenance
Mike Leman, Singing Hills Landscape
Cindy McCord, Bloom Floralscapes
Mike Ransom, Lifescape Colorado
Kent Sondgerath, Denver Parks & Recreation
Steve Steele, Keesen Landscape Management



International Society of Arboriculture Rocky Mountain Chapter

President **Kyle Sylvester**, City of Brighton
 President-elect **Sara Davis**, City & County of Denver
 Vice President **Natalie McNeill**, Davey Tree Expert Co.
 Past President **John Wesolowski**, City of Aurora
 Secretary/Treasurer **Scott Grimes**, Colorado Tree Consultants

Directors:

Bill Cassel, Technical Landscape Consultants; **Derek Stroden**, Ironwood Earthcare; **Dana Coelho**, US Forest Service and **Teddy Hildebrandt**, T4 Tree Services
 Colorado State Director **Becky Wegner**, Mountain High Tree & Landscape
 ISA Representative **Jim Klett**, CSU
 Montana State Director **Patrick Plantenberg**, State of Montana
 New Mexico State Director **Donald Lovato**, Trees Inc.
 Wyoming State Director **Bill Scott**, Green Tree Arboriculture, LLC



Colorado Arborists and Lawn Care Professionals

President **Rick Roehm**, Helena Chemical Co.
 Vice President **Terry Dwyer**, Site One Landscape Supply
 Treasurer/Past President **Tom Lynch**, Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care

Directors:

Wade Grove, Green Mountain Lawn
Chris Martin, Davey Expert Tree Co.
Mike Reis
Dan Defibaugh, Plants of Distinction
Shawn Wissel, South Suburban Parks & Recreation
Thia Walker, CSU Bio Ag Sciences
Emilie Hudson, Terracare Associates



Garden Centers of Colorado

President **Krystal Keistler-Hawley**, Echter's Nursery and Garden Center
 Vice President **Will Knowles**, Creek Side Gardens
 Treasurer **Shelly Breitenbach**, Shelly's Garden Country
 Past President **Loren Bauman**, Jared's Nursery, Gift and Garden

Directors:

Keri Luster, Groundcovers Greenhouse and **Trela Phelps**, City Floral Garden Center

Associate Representatives:

Mandy Foster, Welby Gardens; **Scott Kegerreis**, WaterPulse,
Charlotte Rose, Center Greenhouse and **Jim Wilson**, Organix Supply
 Education Representative **Jim Klett**, CSU



Rocky Mountain Sod Growers

President **Steve Korby**, Korby Sod, LLC

Vice President **Shane Markham**, Green Hills Sod Farm, Inc.



ASLA Colorado

American Society of Landscape Architects Colorado Chapter

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Past President **David Gregory**, Oxbow Design Collaborative

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Colorado Nursery and Greenhouse Association

President **Jesse Eastman**, Fort Collins Nursery

President - Elect/Secretary/Treasurer **Dan Wise**, Fort Collins Wholesale Nursery
Officer at Large **Levi Heidrich**, Heidrich's Colorado Tree Farm

Directors:

Bill Kluth, 2016, Tagawa Greenhouse Enterprises, LLC

Sarada Krishnan, 2016-2017, Denver Botanic Gardens

Kirby Thompson, 2016-2017, Britton Nursery, Inc.

Kerri Dantino 2015-2016, Little Valley Wholesale

Stan Brown, 2015-2016, Alameda Wholesale Nursery, Inc.

Beth Gulley, 2016-2017, Gulley Greenhouse & Garden Center

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Colorado companies win national awards

The superior achievements of several Colorado companies was recognised during the **National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) LANDSCAPES** conference in October 2015.

Designs By Sundown, Englewood, received NALP **Grand Awards** for three projects in two categories: Residential Design/Build for Continental View Drive and Modern in Denver, and Residential Landscape Management for Polo Club. The company also received a Merit Award for Westglow in the Residential Design/Build category.

Photo courtesy Designs By Sundown

Timberline Landscaping, Inc., Colorado Springs brought back a **Grand Award** in the Erosion Control/Ecological Restoration category for the Manitou Incline Trail Renovation, Phase I. The company also received two Merit Awards for work at The Broadmoor Hotel and The Olympic Training Center. Additionally, Timberline was recognized for its safety record and having the most Landscape Industry Certified Individuals on their team.

Photo courtesy Timberline Landscaping, Inc.



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Lifescape Associates, Denver, received a **Grand Award** for the Castle Pines Residence project. This project was celebrated as one of the top four design/build projects in the U.S. and Canada.

Photo courtesy Lifescape Associates

L.I.D. Landscapes, Boulder, received Merit Awards for two projects, Littlepage Residence and Boulder Country Club Residence in the Residential Design/Build category.

Photo courtesy Sara Monares

Terracare Associates, Littleton, received a **Recognition Award** in the category Commercial Landscape Management for the Rampart Range Metro Districts project in Lone Tree.

Photo courtesy Terracare Associates

Lindgren Landscaping and Irrigation, Fort Collins, received a **Hardscape North America (HNA) Project Award** for the Italian Villa project in the Residential Category for Combination of Hardscape Products.

Photo courtesy Lindgren Landscaping and Irrigation



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Designs By Sundown raises money for blood cancers

Employees of **Designs By Sundown**, Englewood, along with families and friends joined together in October for the Light the Night Walk at Washington Park, Denver, to raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS). With an outpouring of support from employees, suppliers, subs and clients, Team Designs By Sundown raised \$11,835 to help find a cure for blood cancers.



The DBS team

Photo courtesy Designs By Sundown

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New lower-water plants for 2016

Plant Select®, a collaborative effort between Colorado State University, Denver Botanic Gardens and horticulturists from around the world is pleased to announce six new plants that are being promoted in 2016 along with three additional plants in the Plant Select® Petites program. Plant Select® is a leading source of plants that thrive in the High Plains and intermountain region. These plants will provide smart, stunning and successful gardens using less water and fewer resources and ultimately have a more positive environmental impact. 



Standing Ovation

Photo courtesy North Creek Nursery



Photo courtesy North Creek Nursery

Schizachyrium scoparium 'Standing Ovation' Standing Ovation little bluestem

This patented selection of native plants is a warm season grass that does well in poor, dry soils growing two to three feet in height and 12-18 inches in width. It keeps a tight habit throughout the entire growing season. The mound of bluish-green leaves transition to a brilliant display of red, changing to deep purple in the autumn. The plant was brought to Plant Select® by North Creek Nurseries.

Tips & Tricks: Seed heads remain upright through winter and provide winter interest and food for birds.

Zone 3



Photo courtesy Brooke Calburn

Salvia reptans 'P0165' Autumn Sapphire™ Sage

This commonly known West Texas sage blooms late in the season. This sage is a superior form that has glossy green, willowy leaves all season long and produces small, sapphire blue flowers in the autumn. It grows 18 to 24 inches tall and wide.

Tips & Tricks: This plant provides a rich nectar source for pollinators late into the season after many other flowers have faded.

Zone 5



Photo courtesy Alan Tower

Delosperma 'Alan's Apricot' PPAF Alan's Apricot Ice Plant

Shades of pink flowers with yellow centers were abundant and held well above attractive dark green foliage. The plant has strong stems with little lodging, even with overhead irrigation.

Tips & Tricks: This is a great plant for pollinators and for use in rock gardens or walls.

Zone 4

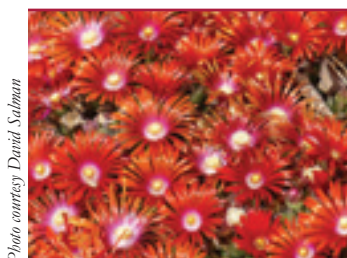


Photo courtesy David Salman

Delosperma x hybrida 'PWWG025' Red Mountain® Flame Ice Plant

This new hybrid ice plant is a tough, vigorous, cold-hardy form with large, blazing orange-red flowers in late spring and early summer. The flowers are larger, nearly 2 inches wide, with a red flame flower color. It was selected by David Salman of Waterwise Gardening in Santa Fe, NM.

Tips & Tricks: The plant's small, deep green, succulent leaves are evergreen and attract pollinators.

Zone 4



Photo courtesy Scott Steigerhoe

Viburnum burejaeticum 'P0175' Mini Man™ Dwarf Manchurian Viburnum

Mini Man is a compact form of Manchurian Viburnum introduced by Fort Collins Wholesale Nursery. It has medium green, velvety leaves in the summer and clusters of white flowers in spring followed by persistent red to blue-black fruit all on a compact plant. It grows 4 to 6 feet in height and width.

Tips & Tricks: This deer resistant plant is native to Russia and northern China and is an excellent smaller shrub for cold climates.

Zone 3



Cynodon 'PWIN04S' Dog Tuff™ grass

This sterile hybrid grass spreads by runners and is more resilient to wear and tear compared to American Buffalo grass. It is named for its durability in yards with dogs. Once established this grass is highly weed resistant, deep rooted and provides a soft, cushioned feel.



Photo courtesy Kelly Grammons

Tips & Tricks: It is a warm season grass that turns green in spring and goes dormant in mid-autumn.

Zone 5



Plant Select® Petites for 2016

Draba rigida - Yellow Stardust Draba

To best appreciate this tiny treasure, plant it in an easily observable site close to a rock or in a container garden. It grows 2 to 3 inches in height and 6 to 10 inches wide. Yellow flowers cover the plant in the springtime.



Photo courtesy Kirk Fieseler

Tips & Tricks: This is a great plant for rock and fairy gardens, and offering a few rocks for it to nestle up to will allow it to thrive for many years.

Zone 4



Pinus monophylla 'Blue Jazz' Blue Jazz Pinyon Pine

Blue Jazz is a slow-growing, adaptable and durable conifer and is globe forming. It is a perfect addition for a permanent evergreen presence in any garden. It grows only 1 to 3 inches per year.



Photo courtesy Kirk Fieseler

Tips & Tricks: This is a great choice for beauty and year round interest in a water wise garden. It can be used in containers and rock and fairy gardens.

Zone 4



Pterocephalus depressus – Moroccan Pincushion Flower

This plant offers beautiful features for any garden with its low-matte like growth habit, evergreen leaves and short stemmed pincushion-like seed heads. It grows to about 3 inches in height and 10 to 15 inches in width.



Photo courtesy Pat Heyward

Tips & Tricks: Plant in well-drained soil with full sun exposure for best performance. It is a great plant for raised beds and rock walls.

Zone 4



Legend



Full sun



Prefers shadier conditions



Requires moisture



Prefers/adapts to part shade



Useful for containers



Requires more moisture



Xeric



—Contributed by James E. Kleit,
Colorado State University, Department of
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Inside CoCal Landscape

Culture breeds training, retention and a good time

—By *Cherie Courtade*

It's not easy to maintain a consistent, reliable workforce in the landscape industry these days. This remains a major pain point for Colorado business owners, hindering their companies' growth and productivity.

We've heard or learned firsthand that happy and engaged employees are more productive and stay with a company longer. But there's more to it. They also are more likely to bring in quality new hires. So, what's the secret to recruiting and developing people who are happy, engaged, and willing to stick around? One major factor is company culture.

This family-owned business led by Chuy, has worked hard to create a culture of training and respect that allows employees to learn and grow with the company.

CoCal Landscape Services, Inc., Denver, founded by Jesus "Chuy" Medrano, president, has an outstanding track record of employee recruitment and retention. Says HR administrator Mari Medrano Mejia, "People come here and stay here. The most turnover is with new employees, but there is much less after their first year." Some of their people have been there since the beginning – 20 years – and the average tenure for foremen is 13 years.

Colorado Green spent some time with the CoCal team recently to learn more about the company culture and how they do things.



Jesus "Chuy" Medrano, CoCal founder and president



CoCal Leadership Team: Carlos Medrano, Mari Medrano Mejia, Jesus "Chuy" Medrano, Jody Medrano, Mark Johnson, Luis Estrada and Stacy Parcell



Photos courtesy: ALCC

The CoCal Way

This family-owned business led by Chuy, has worked hard to create a culture of training and respect that allows employees to learn and grow with the company. According to CoCal's executive team, some of the successful aspects of their company culture were borne out of listening to employees and responding to their needs, interests and suggestions.

Jody Medrano, general manager, says "we created the Rising Stars program to develop employees in what we call The CoCal Way of how we do things." The program identifies team members who show a desire to learn and an interest in developing new skills. Participants can be new hires or long-time employees who commit to 30 hours of training over the winter in weekly sessions. They work with a mentor – a senior staff member – and learn about greater responsibility within the company.

Continuing education is encouraged of all employees and Rising Stars is an open group. "Staff members who are not currently part of the Rising Stars program are always welcome to attend if they are interested," says Carlos Medrano, VP operations, who heads the branch office in Longmont. Employees can pursue industry certifications and full-time staff is offered training over the winter months.

CoCal University

Employees learn from the start that if they show potential, there's mobility within the company. CoCal University is the company's onboarding and training program. Senior staff helps employees learn more about possibilities in the company and supports them in growing into a new position.

Cross-training is also part of the company culture and gives employees a window into another area of the business that might interest them and can lead to career mobility. "We cater to what individuals want to learn because it keeps them more engaged," says designer Stacey Parcell. If they want to understand Xeriscape, for example, she will teach them.

Says Mari, "Cross training staff also helps people learn to respect each other by seeing what their jobs require." She shared how last year a field supervisor went out to make cold calls that a

sales person would normally do, and "he came back with a new appreciation of the challenges faced by team members in another role."

Creating future employees

CoCal doesn't stop at educating its own staff but supports the education of the next generation. They help fund scholarships through the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) to which Chuy is a Platinum Level contributor. The company also employs high school and college students as seasonal workers. Many work through the summer months, and at the end of the season are awarded a \$100 scholarship for school textbooks.



The stick figure of Chuy Medrano is part of CoCal's branding that adds fun and honors the founder and president.



Vehicle wraps are part of the CoCal Way and add fun to their brand.



CoCal takes pride in maintaining award winning landscapes.

Photo courtesy CoCal Landscape Services



Winning team in CoCal's volleyball tournament

Using interns is another way to help educate future industry employees and possibly find the next new hire. Student interns come from local colleges as well as those outside Colorado. CoCal also finds interns by attending NALP Student Career Days each year.

Recognizing success

Once on board, CoCal creates an atmosphere that challenges employees to be the best they can be, and senior staff gives them the support they need. For example, when members of the sales team showed potential to exceed sales goals, the senior team made changes to support their success. "By making changes to internal systems," says Jody, "two team members were able to reach one million dollars in sales for the year. To recognize their achievement, we created the Million Dollar Club." The two inaugural members received incentives for their accomplishments and now others work toward joining the club.

CoCal holds a Crew Cup Competition annually, an innovation suggested by a new employee. This internal awards program recognizes teams who have completed exceptional projects during the last year in both the maintenance and enhancement divisions. Foremen submit their best work, which a team evaluates. Judges are not limited to staff with technical know-how. They also include office staff "because they have the eye to look at what a typical homeowner or property manager would see," explains Carlos.

People come here and stay here. Some of their people have been there since the beginning – 20 years – and the average tenure for foremen is 13 years.

Make time for fun

CoCal recognizes the value of getting to know the rest of the team in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. Company picnics and other social events build a family-like atmosphere that promotes cohesive teams. CoCal's annual volleyball tournament at the summer picnic had 12 competing teams last year. The winning team went on to compete as CoCal's entry in the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) annual tournament.

That feeling of family instilled through Chuy's leadership early on continues to make for a loyal workforce. Employees who feel valued and are comfortable with their co-workers are likely to stay around.

The family culture also extends to the larger community. CoCal believes in giving back. In addition to scholarships, the company sponsors sports teams in the community.

The family culture also extends to the larger community. CoCal believes in giving back. In addition to scholarships, the company sponsors sports teams in the community.

Positive culture facilitates recruitment

CoCal team members are the best source of new employee referrals. They convey the spirit of The CoCal Way to people when they are out in the community, and those who are attracted to it could be a good fit.

The value of the culture has revealed itself in other helpful ways. At a job fair in early 2015, recruitment circumstances were difficult, attendance was low and competition among employers was high. Yet Mari, Stacy and Carlos successfully recruited three new employees – one was a seasonal employee who worked through the snow season, and two others were full-time hires.

It's a testament to the management team's ability to convey the company's culture and generate excitement about the organization that they had this success in a challenging environment.

Management is always on the lookout for new talent. Whether they are at a college recruitment event or getting the oil changed in their car, they are looking for people with potential. Says Carlos, "Skills can be taught, but attitude is everything when it comes to finding a great new employee." 🌿

—Cherie Courtade is ALCC's marketing and administration manager

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One company's DOT audit



We weren't thrilled about the fine, but that trooper gave me his email and I've gotten my \$4,000 back in value from all the calls and emails that he's answered.

The cost of the fine came back in value

We lost a truck a few years ago when a 100-mile-per-hour wind gust pushed our truck against the guard rail at a major freeway interchange. The truck – along with the 10,000 lb. skid on the trailer behind it – rolled three times. The driver survived and the skid never came off the trailer. If it had come off – or the trailer had separated from the truck – people could have been killed.

What could have happened is every company's worst nightmare. Why didn't it happen to us?

Probably some good luck and because we do everything we can to dot our "i's" and cross our "t's" about fleet safety. And while we do the work daily with vehicle inspections and DOT logs and more to be compliant with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act (FMCSA), that didn't protect us from a \$4,000 fine not so long ago.

The audit process that led up to the fine wasn't all bad. The Colorado State Patrol monitors vehicle safety and their number one goal is to protect public safety on the roads. Unlike other law enforcement agencies, they operate on a zero revenue base. They will come to your business and work with you and your staff, including drivers, so you can be compliant. They will take calls and answer emails whenever you have a question. They exist to be a resource and that's why I have found them to be one of the most user-friendly law enforcement agencies in the state.



Photo courtesy ALCC

Photo courtesy Winger Photography LLC

What could have happened is every company's worst nightmare. Why didn't it happen to us?

If your company comes up for a DOT audit, a state trooper is the one that conducts it – because the federal government has put jurisdiction for FMCSA compliance in the hands of local law enforcement. In our case, when the trooper came in for the audit, he found we were generally in compliance. But the one big thing we didn't know resulted in the fine. The trooper felt really bad about it, but because of FMCSA it was out of his control.

Where we went wrong was in how our CDL drivers were routinely drug and alcohol tested. We had hiring policies, a driver policy plus drug and alcohol testing in place. But we did not know that anyone who is a CDL driver must be randomly drug and alcohol tested by an outside, third party. This one regulation we didn't know about bought us the fine.

We weren't thrilled about the fine, but that trooper gave me his email and I've gotten my \$4,000 back in value from all the calls and emails that he's answered. Overall, I feel our industry under-utilizes the State Troopers. They really do offer great value because their job is to make our roads safer.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here the owner of a large commercial landscape company based along the Front Range shares about a CDOT audit, the resulting fine and his experience with Colorado State Troopers.

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Landscape firms are at risk for what they don't know

When having enough semi-skilled employees out on the job is a daily challenge, staying on top of the details of U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), or any compliance, may not be high on your to-do list. It won't get any job done sooner. It won't help Mrs. Jones feel better about the third delay of her start date.

It's not in your face and it's not critical – today at least.

But when you step back and take another look, it's clear that compliance – or lack thereof – can nail you. What are the risks associated with the trucks you put on the pavement every day? If the one driver whose MVR went south last month is in an accident, where does that leave you? Will details you didn't know make you responsible? Too often, companies find out too late that what they didn't know they needed to know, and what they didn't do they needed to do.

By Becky Garber in collaboration with Moe Mosley and Shannon Ratts

Whether you know the law or **not**, you are liable for the consequences of **not** following it.



Department of Transportation (DOT) compliance is one of the requirements for doing business as a landscape company in Colorado or any other state which, like Colorado, may have adopted the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) as its own. Federal law governs the rules of the road with some county and city regs thrown in.

Every time trucks are pulled over at a check point and fines are incurred comes a reminder about these regulations. The costs of ongoing fines and the risks of marginally safe equipment on the road will add up. A few fines a year can easily hit \$1,000 to \$5,000 and accidents cost more. Don't forget to add in the lost time when vehicles are put out of service at roadside inspections and the costs of repair or moving vehicles and work comp insurance. You might even be liable for more money than the Jones job will bring in.

The basics: Compliance starts with a DOT number

It's important for landscape company owners to know a few basics about DOT/FMCSA requirements. Standards and benchmarks apply that relate to gross vehicle weight (GVW) – including total weight of the vehicle and trailer. Those benchmarks dictate if a DOT number is required and when a vehicle must be driven by someone with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Requirements kick in at different GVW thresholds that specify hiring practices for drivers, drug testing and how it is done, employee records that must be maintained and vehicle record keeping requirements. It gets complicated fast!

Let's start at the beginning – when companies first fall into the realm of DOT/FMCSA compliance. It starts with a gross vehicle weight rating. Whenever a truck and trailer weigh in at 10,001 lbs. or more, during that timeframe, it is considered to be a Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) and subject to DOT/FMCSA regs. Any landscape company, even with one pick-up, can become subject to the regulations and requirements of CMVs when its pickup weighing

less than 10,001 lbs. is towing a trailer and the combined weight of truck plus trailer equals 10,001 lbs. or more. The truck must have required DOT markings, the company name clearly displayed, properly secured cargo and it may be subject to roadside inspections. In other words, you don't have to own a big fleet of trucks to need a US DOT number and be subject to the law. Whether you know the law or not, you are liable for the consequences of not following it.

Once companies apply for and obtain their DOT number, the DOT Safety Management System (SMS) database updates all the company's violations and related information and it becomes a matter of public record. This database is accessed at www.safersys.org using the firm's DOT number. Beyond the public record, companies can use their own PIN number to drill down on the site for more detailed data. If you are stopped by a trooper, it is likely that the trooper will access this information and more.

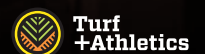
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How **two** Colorado landscape companies need to ramp up

What internal audits revealed

Colorado Green recently had an opportunity to have two typical landscape companies evaluated by a third party firm, Moe-mentum, LLC, whose specialty is helping companies get on the road to DOT/FMCSA compliance. Both landscape firms, that will remain anonymous, opened up their driver files, vehicle records and violation records to scrutiny. You will learn where these two companies stand today – and where they need to improve to move toward compliance.



Evaluating Company A and Company B

Both companies do standard landscape work and snow removal and they have crews working year round. The starting point for the evaluations of both firms was for them to complete a multi-page questionnaire and to review their online DOT Safety Measurement System (SMS) records.

One costly record keeping mistake companies often make is failure to update their MCS 150 Form with their annual Vehicle Miles Traveled. This form may be found within the SMS on the last page. When companies go online to register for their DOT number, they provide this information. Afterwards, the required updates often get overlooked because there are no reminders from DOT / FMCSA to update annual miles traveled. Yet not doing so can result in a \$1,000 fine. Both Company A and Company B had failed to update the miles traveled data and could be subject to the fine.

Internal documentation

Besides traffic and vehicle inspection violations, companies with CMVs must also maintain three required files on each driver with specific information in each file. The required files are:

- Driver Qualification File
- Drug & Alcohol File and
- Driver Investigation File.

When a company is audited, the inspector or auditor will select random drivers and review the contents of their files for completeness.

Files must contain up to 13 different categories of specific information starting when the

Files must be kept and maintained throughout the driver's term of employment *and beyond.*

candidate fills out the application for employment. These files must be kept and maintained throughout the driver's term of employment and beyond.

Maintaining these files means procedures must be in place so that required information is acquired and filed. For example, driver records from past employers must be obtained and someone must file those records. Another record that must be in these files is completion of new-hire driver testing on company vehicles. This may require one person to do the testing and an administrative person to maintain the file.

Depending on the company, one person may be in charge of some requirements such as driver testing, another may be in charge of drug testing and a third person may be in charge of the files. There are many places where steps along the way can be missed and info can fall through the cracks. That is how companies become non-compliant.

During audits, the sweet spot for any company is to show that it is making strides to become compliant. Claiming ignorance will not head off fines. Each violation has a code and a corresponding fine that an inspector or auditor is mandated to present to the carrier (company).

Company A's SMA record

Company A has been in business about ten years and has a fleet of 24 vehicles and 25 drivers. Several vehicles are in the gross vehicle weight (GVW) category that exceeds 10,001 lbs. and the company has no CDL drivers on staff.

The online SMS report revealed the following information about Company A:

- It had 4 roadside inspections that resulted in 10 violations during the previous two years.
- There were 3 Out-of-Service violations (OOS) which meant vehicles had to be repaired before they could be driven again. These violations may carry some of the largest fines, and having many of them will throw up a red flag that could lead to an audit.
- One violation involved a driver in a vehicle that required a CDL. That driver did not have the required CDL nor the required medical card, which resulted in a \$295 fine.

Overall, the online review showed a violation record that was not excessive – but the goal should still be to eliminate new violations and improve the company's ratings.



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Company B's SMA record

Company B, being a much larger firm, is in a position to have greater exposure. It has been in business more than 25 years, has 48 vehicles and employs 65 drivers, of whom one has a CDL.

The online report of Company B showed a warning sign in the vehicle maintenance category, which can flag a company for audit. The online report revealed the following information about Company B:

- There were 76 violations during 15 inspections in the past 2 years.
- Examples of their OOS violations included bald tires, inoperative turn signals, no breakaways and no emergency brakes.
- 22 of these violations were Out-of-Service (OOS) violations meaning vehicles were parked on the side of the road, could not be driven and required someone from the firm to drive out to the inspection site and pick up the driver and crew.
- Another violation involved a driver who could not communicate effectively with the trooper. In addition to speaking English, drivers must be able to read what a trooper hands to them and failure to do so is a violation.

Overall, Company B's Out-of-Service rate for vehicles at 85.7 and for drivers at 13.3 resulted in costly fines and down time. This record could raise red flags leading to an audit.

When the internal files of Company A and Company B were reviewed, one had a better compliance and record-keeping than the other. Nevertheless, both firms have an action list they need to address so that information is secured and documented in each employee's file. For example, both companies failed to have their company name and location on their employment application forms. Neither knew it was required.

When Moe-mentum, LLC reviewed the Driver Qualification File for both companies, they followed the same procedure an auditor would and randomly pulled driver files for review. Company A, the smaller firm, was missing 27 percent of the required information. Company A is doing a good job of tracking driver's license renewal dates and reviewing motor vehicle records (MVRs) annually. They were missing date of hire on all but one driver and had no record that one driver had completed the road test with a company vehicle. The violation check was missing on one driver.

Overall, Company A has done a reasonable job of tracking information required in driver files. Improved procedures and tracking should bring them into a top position. Should they be audited, their self-audit will show they are taking steps to become compliant, which auditors want to see.

There are many places where steps along the way can be missed and info can fall through the cracks. That is how companies become non-compliant.

Company B was missing more than 50 per cent of the required information. Sixty percent of CDL or driver's license renewal dates were missing. For all drivers 100% of information in the following categories was missing: previous employer history, date of last MVR check, annual review of driving record, date of road test of company vehicles and violations list. Company B has more serious compliance issues. Company B needs to establish procedures to do what is required (driver testing, obtaining MVRs, etc.) and record that it has been done.



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Photo courtesy: Nate Adams



One Colorado company uses the State Patrol for resource.

Results and next steps

For both companies, the online SMS data about roadside inspections and violations revealed an unnecessary cost of doing business that could be controlled with better knowledge of DOT requirements and better vehicle maintenance practices. Company A is in a better position with both vehicle maintenance and record keeping, though still not 100 percent compliant. Company B is much more at risk for fines and added overhead if roadside inspections and out-of-service violations are not brought under control. Red flags in the online SMS system could lead to an audit and during an audit, more violations related to record keeping could result.

During audits, the sweet spot for any company is to show that it is making strides to become compliant.

At the end of the review process, both firms were given a manual of information including checklists of steps they need to take to become compliant and Moe-mentum has consulted with them about the process. What's the result? Leaders in both companies are grateful for the eye-opening details and the action plan. Said both, "We can do this!"

After the audit, Company A began setting up procedures to resolve record-keeping issues. Company B recently put a fleet manager in place and soon after the audit, he and the company mechanic attended training that will help them work together on compliance issues. With information and an action plan, both companies are now on the road to better compliance and control of unwanted costs.

—Becky Garber is ALCC's Communications Director

Commercial vehicle weight class rules – truck and trailer

Commercial vehicle weight	DOT number	CDL	Pre-post vehicle inspection
GW under 10,001 lbs.	No	No	Not required; recommended
GW (including trailer and cargo) 10,001 – 26,000 lbs.	Yes	No	Yes
GW (including trailer) over 26,001 lbs.	Yes	Yes	Yes

CMV regulations for companies: A short list

Regulations for drivers of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) require internal documentation including:

- DOT/FMCSA employment application
- Driver qualification file
- Driver investigation file
- Drug & alcohol testing (for CDL only)
- New-hire driver road test
- Driver records
- Total vehicle miles traveled
- Driver hours of service record
- Traffic violations
- Vehicle inspection violations



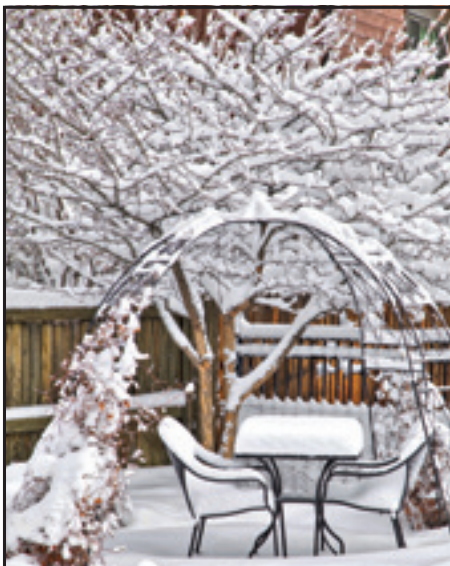
For nearly 20 years, Moe Mosley, founder of Moe-mentum, LLC, Golden, has consulted with businesses and other organizations nationwide on matters related to DOT/FMCSA, MSHA, OSHA compliance, general insurance matters and risk management. Moe has served many terms on the Colorado Dept. of Labor, Colorado Workers' Compensation Cost Containment Board as well as sat on boards and committees of trade and other organizations whose constituents are impacted by compliance issues.

Moe-mentum conducted the research and evaluations of the two companies presented in these case studies. Pro bono services provided for the benefit of this article are valued at approximately \$2,000 per company. Contact info: moementum@msn.com, Moe Mosley 303-829-4568 and/or Shannon Ratts 303-912-2986.

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¹ According to your vehicle's recommended maintenance schedule for up to two years or 30,000 miles, whichever comes first. Does not include air filters. Covers six oil changes for gasoline engines and four oil changes for diesel. Extra charge may apply for dual rear wheel tire rotations. See participating dealer for restrictions and complete details.

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Have a fleet of 10 or more vehicles?

Here are 2 tips from Swingle that drive fleet efficiency

By Becky Garber



Photo courtesy Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care

Terry Overhuls, fleet manager, Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care

When you manage a fleet of 170 vehicles as Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care's fleet manager Terry Overhuls does, every process that saves time counts. And when it's not only his time but overall company operations involved, strategic choices matter even more. Following are two time and money saving fleet management options Overhuls recommends.

Efficiency #1: Consolidate all vehicle registrations into a Common Vehicle Registration Date

Any company with a fleet of 10 or more power units can synchronize all vehicle registrations to renew during the same month. The process begins by going to the Colorado Department of Revenue website and applying for a fleet management number. Once a fleet number has been assigned, you can proceed to designate – at your own choosing – the month of the year when all vehicles will renew as your Common Vehicle Registration Date.

To get all vehicles onto the same renewal month will take about a year of working through existing registration deadlines. But once that is done, all vehicles can be renewed at the same time. As new vehicles are added to the fleet, registration fees will be prorated to expire in the designated month and will then need to be renewed again. For example, if your renewal month is September and a new vehicle is purchased in March, its first renewal date will be six months later, in September. From that point forward, it will renew annually in September.



Photo courtesy Winger Landscape Photography, LLC

What are the benefits of a Common Vehicle Registration Date?

Time, according to Overhuls, is number one. "With the 170 vehicles, we literally could have vehicles needing registrations every single month," he says. That means at least two trips to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) per month as the counties typically will not process more than 5 or 6 renewals per company per day while you wait. Also, with the common registration date, no one has to track renewal deadlines if renewal notices are not sent or get lost in the mail. Each year, the state sends a Fleet Renewal Declaration listing all vehicles set to renew.

"I can take a check to the DMV and drop off all of the renewals at one time," says Overhuls. He also adds that while the staff at the DMV can process all the renewals in one day, "Don't expect that you will walk out with all the new registrations the same day that you drop them off. There are likely other fleets in front of you." That takes more time. But he can walk in to the DMV, drop off the renewal info with a blank check and pick up the registrations and stickers later. Consolidating registrations allows him to do more productive things with his time.

Logistics and cash flow

For the process to run smoothly it takes front-end planning. Overhuls says in any given year they may have 50 or more vehicles requiring emissions testing. His challenge is to orchestrate that process so emission tests are completed on time with minimal impact on the work day.

The other logistic is financial - having the cash flow in place to renew all the vehicles the same month. Swingle does this by accruing a specific amount each month for registration fees.

Efficiency #2: Look at hiring a refueling service

Three nights per week a 3,000 gallon tanker truck with a 50-ft. hose wheels into Swingle's yard and fills vehicle and equipment tanks with gas, diesel and off-road diesel. Fees are cost-plus based on gallons used. In other words, the price per gallon includes a mark-up to cover fueling time and the same per-gallon rate applies whether a truck needs 3 gallons or a full tank.

Most of Swingle's vehicles are filled by the service. Exclusions are the 25 or so trucks that run on propane and during the winter, the 30 or more vehicles which must be parked inside the garage to keep the tanks and plumbing

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from freezing. Fueling services are not allowed to refuel indoors, so garaged vehicles are refilled by Swingle staff using underground tanks in their yard. Propane-powered vehicles are also refilled from on-site tanks.

What are the benefits of a refueling service?

“The tradeoff is less downtime and reducing the risk of accidents,” says Overhuls. Swingle’s in-house cost studies have shown that it is both safer and cheaper to use the refueling service.

“When drivers come in at night, they’re ready to go home – not stand in line to refuel their trucks – and it’s the same in the morning. A line at the fuel pump means downtime while people are still on the clock and a later start or end to their day. It also creates inconvenient bottlenecks in the yard.”

Refueling at retail locations brings similar concerns. When companies do fill-ups at retail stores, the crew not only stops for gas but also takes time getting drinks and food. “The other drawback is being in a congested location with more exposure to accidents,” says Overhuls. Weighing the costs and the risks, the Swingle team believes they are best served by outsourcing the refueling process.

Photo courtesy Winger Landscape Photography, LLC



Propane tanks fuel about 25 vehicles

Will a refueling service work for a small fleet?

“We have more than 100 vehicles serviced, so it will be a little cheaper for us than for a fleet of 10 vehicles. But even with a small fleet, it’s worth taking the time to shop the price.” There are not many vendor options, he says – maybe only 3 or 4 services in Denver. The firm that refuels their Denver location also services their smaller fleets at Swingle’s Fort Collins and northwest Denver branches. If your fleet is smaller, it could be worth talking to another company near yours to see if they use a service or if they are considering one. Shopping together might help both firms get the best price, Overhuls suggests. 🍃

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Leadership Breakfast speaker 9News reporter Greg Moss

KUSA 9News business reporter and anchor Greg Moss has showcased new businesses and emerging business trends in his popular early morning TV segments since 1993. When you attend the Leadership Breakfast Wednesday morning February 10, 2016, you will have the unique, in-person opportunity to gain Moss’s perspective on the Colorado business scene.



Jamie **NOTTER**

The Truth about Attracting Millennials

Face the future of the workforce in two Friday morning sessions about attracting millennials to your company and keeping them. Jamie Notter and his colleague Maddie Grant will tell you what you need to know about this emerging generation, whether you want to attract them to your team or do business with them.



Phil **HARWOOD**

2 Sessions: The Ultimate Account Manager and Becoming a Great Foreman

Green industry business consultant Phil Harwood has strategies to help people in the two most critical positions do their jobs better. Account managers will learn no-nonsense steps they can take to be more effective as the liaison with clients and customers. Foreman will learn how their role impacts company growth and profitability – and that their decisions matter. This session will help already good foremen become great foremen.



David **FELLMAN**

5 Ways to Make Your Small Business More Successful

Here are your five big takeaways from ProGreen that will improve your small business. David Fellman will share the top five of his 10 strategies that build successful businesses. These are the five strategies that are foremost for green industry businesses to adopt and follow in order to become stronger, more effective and more profitable organizations.



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Top five trial winners

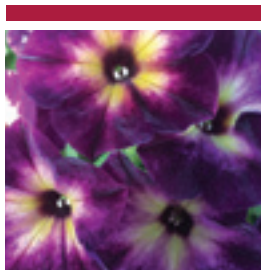
The top five winners from the Hardy Boy trial event were plants with either vibrant flowers or unusual foliage. Most plants will be available for the 2016 season. 

1



Petunia Sanguna Radiant Blue | The prolific, gorgeous, deep blue flowers with a white center appear continuously through the whole summer. The plant has a vigorous, semi-trailing habit. This petunia has outstanding landscape performance in the ground or in containers.

2



Petunia Moonstruck | This petunia has a unique flower with a yellow center radiating out into the deep purple outside. The plant habit was very nice in containers. This is still an experimental variety, so it will probably not be available in 2016.

3



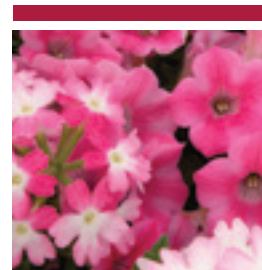
Coleus Mainstreet Rodeo Drive | This coleus has a robust growth habit with unique oak-shaped, lobed green leaves with dark burgundy edges and burgundy blotches on the undersides. It is good in sun or shade. The colorful foliage is great for containers.

4



Coleus Under the Sea Fish Net | This new coleus has eye catching leaves of bright green with dark burgundy veins and markings, and a uniquely serrated edge. It will grow up to 48" tall and 24" wide making it a nice size for landscapes or in larger containers.

5



Kwik Cherry Blossom | This is a multi-species mix of Calibrachoa Callie White Rose Vein, Petunia Whispers Star Rose and Verbena Lanai Twister Pink. This dark rose and white combination takes full sun and blooms continuously all summer.



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Snow Angel coral bells

It's the middle of winter and visions of snow still abound, but you won't see Snow Angel coral bells in the garden until spring has fully arrived. An easy care, low maintenance perennial for gardens in sun or shade, Snow Angel is grown both for its bright coral-red flowers in spring and early summer as well as for its richly variegated leaves that are attractive all season long.

And though there are hundreds of heucheras now filling catalogs and nursery lots, this durable selection has proven to be hardy under some of Colorado's harshest conditions so deserves special consideration. Especially useful in dry shade, use Snow Angel to lighten up a darker, shady spot, for edging or in drifts. 🌿

Size: 6-12" tall (in flower) x 5-10" wide

Flowers: red, late spring or summer

Leaves: variegated green and white

Form: mounding

Light: full sun to full shade

Culture: Well-drained soils in moderate to dry conditions

Hardiness: USDA Zones 3-9

Design/Maintenance tips:

- Spent flowers stalks are easily pulled when fully dry, or can be cut off at the base to show off the beautiful foliage when flowering has finished.
- Grown in full shade flowers may be sparse, but leaves will be fuller and larger.
- Grown in full sun, plants will be more compact and variegation more pronounced.
- Provide supplemental irrigation for best results.



Photos courtesy Pat Hayward

Photo courtesy TreeL Nursery



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