

On the Grow

Volume 25 No. 6

December 2015



Let It Snow

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Protect Your Property Ahead of Winter Weather

Lisa Schaumann, National Association of Landscape Professionals

Although winter won't officially arrive for several more weeks, many parts of the United States are already dealing with wintery weather in the form of freezing temperatures, snow and ice. Before the next storm hits, the National Association of Landscape Professionals is advising homeowners to take steps to protect their outdoor plants and landscaping. Although many plants are remarkably resilient to winter weather, heavy snow, wind and ice can cause serious damage – from killing plant roots and snapping branches to toppling whole trees.

“When inclement weather is in the forecast, most people focus on stocking up on food, rock salt and other necessities, and don't necessarily think about protecting their property and landscape investments,” says Missy Henriksen, vice president of public affairs, NALP. “The

truth is, plants and trees can be especially vulnerable during periods of extreme weather. A few simple steps can make a big difference when it comes to ensuring that your landscaping survives the winter and will thrive again in the spring.”

NALP recommends the following tips to protect plants, trees and landscapes ahead of winter weather:

1. Wrap plants and smaller trees. Sub-freezing temperatures can damage many plant varieties, including roses, butterfly bushes, hydrangeas and crape myrtles. To provide plants with extra protection from the wind and cold, wrap them in burlap or a frost protection fabric and plant them along a building or fence that offers wind protection.

...continued on next page



All of us at D & K Products would like to take a moment to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year

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Protect Your Property Ahead of Winter Weather *continued* Lisa Schaumann, National Association of Landscape Professionals

2. Inspect newly planted trees and fill in any cracks around the planting hole with soil to prevent cold air from penetrating the root zone. Plant roots are slower to become dormant in the winter than stems, branches and buds, making them more vulnerable to sub-freezing temperatures.

3. Apply 2-3 inches of mulch around trees and shrubs. A layer of mulch will help to insulate roots when the temperature drops. Contrary to popular belief, snow cover will also act as an insulator and keep soil temperatures higher – so there is no need to remove accumulated snow from around plants.

4. If the fall has been dry, water heavily before the ground freezes to reduce frost penetration. Because moist soil holds more heat than dry soil, watering ahead of cold weather will help to prevent frost from penetrating as deeply.

5. Prune tree branches to protect against heavy snow and ice damage. Work with a professional to identify any dead or dangerous tree limbs that should be trimmed to protect your home and property.

6. Prepare for windy conditions. Wind can be one of the most damaging effects of a winter storm. Secure any potted plants, outdoor furniture, awnings and other items on your property that could get damaged in high winds.

7. Protect plants from salt. Rock salt used to deice sidewalks and roads can cause damage to plants. Avoid planting trees and shrubs in areas where salty runoff collects or where salt spray from passing cars could splash onto plants. Consider using burlap barriers to protect plants in vulnerable areas.

8. Plan your landscape with climate in mind. The best way to prevent damage to your landscape is to select plants and trees that are indigenous to your region, and therefore naturally equipped to survive in the climate. A landscape professional can help you to design a landscape for your home that will suit your lifestyle and withstand your region's elements.

For more information on preparing your yard and landscaping for winter weather, or to find a qualified landscape professional in your area, visit LoveYourLandscape.com.



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Keynote Speaker

Teacher, coach, principal, banker, author, husband, father and powerful speaker, Kent Stock, is also the man who coached the 1991 Norway High School baseball team during their now-famous final season. As depicted in the 2007 film, *The Final Season*, the nationally recognized Norway baseball team came together under inauspicious circumstances. They defied the odds under the leadership of first-year head baseball coach, Kent Stock, and proceeded to win Norway's 20th state title.

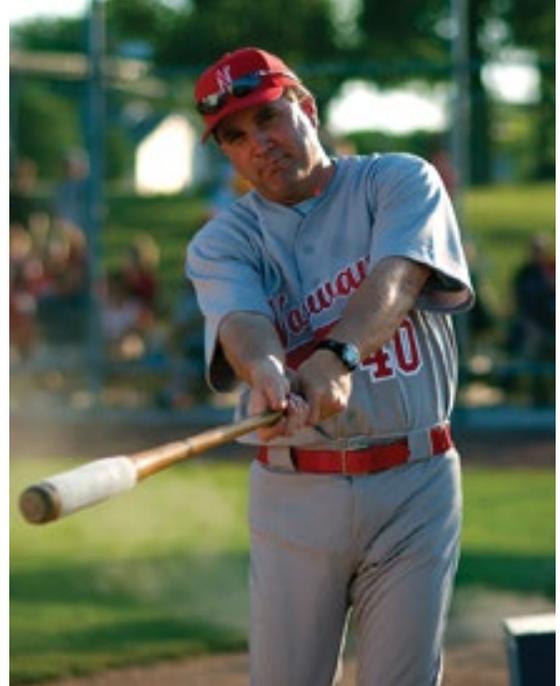
Growing up in central Iowa, Kent excelled at baseball with the support of his close-knit family. To begin his college career, Kent selected Waldorf College, whose baseball program was then ranked 13th nationally. He played second base for Waldorf and then transferred to Luther College his junior year. There he continued to pursue his love of the sport while earning his undergraduate degree in business management with a minor in education.

Kent began his career in Belle Plaine, Iowa where he became well known and respected as both a teacher and coach. While scouting a game he met the head coach of nearby Norway, Iowa's famous baseball team, Jim Van Scoyoc, who agreed to interview Kent for an assistant coach position that had just opened up in Norway. Over the years, Norway, a tiny community of less than 600, defied statistical probability by producing 16 professional baseball players and countless college players. Baseball was pivotal in this small Iowa town.

After a year as Van Scoyoc's assistant, Kent became the head coach just as Norway was notified that the school would be merging with a neighboring school in the fall, making the summer of 1991 the last baseball season as Norway High School. The team, led by 30-year-old Kent, had only one goal in mind as they started their final season – to win Norway's 20th State Title. As you'll see in the movie, they accomplished just that.

Kent remained at Belle Plaine High School another seven years before earning his Masters degree from Drake University in education administration. Kent left Belle Plaine in 1998 to take a middle school principal position in the Linn-Mar Community School District.

Kent authored a book titled, "Heading for Home: My Journey from Little League to Hollywood." Today, Kent is a relationship manager at Community Savings Bank in Cedar Rapids. He lives in Marion, Iowa with his wife, Laurie and two daughters. While a long-time inspirational force for the many students he has taught and coached over the years, their families and countless educational providers, Kent launched his professional speaking career in 2007. His messages of motivation and relationship building have a powerful impact on young and old alike. His stories transcend the baseball field, classroom and office.



Please join us in the General Session on Tuesday, January 26!

82ND ANNUAL IOWA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

Lawn and Landscape Workshop - Monday, January 25, 2016

9:00 am – 10:00 am

What's New in Weed Control?

Nick Christians, PhD, Iowa State University

10:15 am – 11:00 am

Plants with Style

Kelly Norris, M.S., Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden

11:15 am – 12:00 pm

Designing with Maintenance in Mind

Tyler Baird, City of Iowa City

12:00 pm – 12:45 pm

Lunch – Oakdale Ballroom

12:45 pm – 1:30 pm

Keeping Up Your Business Image

Ryan Adams, M.S., Iowa State University

1:45 pm – 2:30 pm

Kentucky Bluegrass Diseases

Paul Koch, PhD, University of Wisconsin

2:45 pm – 3:30 pm

Irrigation

James Essex, Iowa Irrigation

3:45 pm – 4:30 pm

Controlling Warm Season Grasses

Jason Van Engen, Reliable Property Services

Lawn and Landscape Session - Tuesday, January 26, 2016

1:00 pm – 1:45 pm

How the Research Farm Can Help You

Dan Strey, Iowa State University

2:00 pm – 2:45 pm

Equipment Replacement Planning

Neric Smith, M.S., Indian Hills Community College

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Importance of Soil Testing

Nick Christians, PhD, Iowa State University

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Trade Show Open

Coralville Conference Center

Parks and Grounds Session - Tuesday, January 26, 2016

1:00 pm – 1:45 pm

Thinking Outside Your Park

Zac Hall & Colin Stuhr, City of Iowa City

2:00 pm – 2:45 pm

Efficient Parks Maintenance Practices

Joshua Thompson, City of Ames

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Tank Mixing Herbicides

Ryan Adams, M.S., Iowa State University

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Trade Show Open

Coralville Conference Center

Lawn and Landscape Session - Wednesday, January 27, 2016

8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Trade Show Open – Coffee & donuts w/exhibitors

Coralville Conference Center

10:00 am – 10:45 am

Timing Insecticide Applications for Best Effect

Donald Lewis, PhD, Iowa State University

10:45 am – 11:30 am

IPLCA Annual Meeting

Mike Meiers, IPLCA President

Parks and Grounds Session - Wednesday, January 27, 2016

8:30 am – 12:30 pm

Trade Show Open – Coffee & donuts w/exhibitors

Coralville Conference Center

10:00 am – 10:45 am

Soil Testing in Parks

Nick Christians, PhD, Iowa State University

10:45 am – 11:30 am

Borers, Beetles, and Bugs, Oh My!

Donald Lewis, PhD, Iowa State University

82ND ANNUAL IOWA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW REGISTRATION FORM

January 25 - 27, 2016 • Coralville Marriott & Conference Center - Coralville, Iowa

USE ONE FORM PER NAME, PHOTOCOPY BLANK FORM AS MANY TIMES AS NEEDED
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	Pre-Registration Before 1/11/2016	Onsite & After 1/11/2016	Total
Member Price Check one: <input type="checkbox"/> IGCSA <input type="checkbox"/> ISTMA <input type="checkbox"/> IPLCA <input type="checkbox"/> IGA <input type="checkbox"/> ISBGA <input type="checkbox"/> IPRA			
_____ 3-Day Registration with Workshop (Includes Tues / Wed Trade Show, Lunches & PAT)	\$195	\$215	\$
_____ Registration for Monday Workshop Only (Includes Lunch)	\$140	\$150	\$
Choose Your Regular Workshop			
1st	2nd	(Mark your 1st choice in the 1st column & 2nd choice in the 2nd column)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Golf Course Workshop (120 limit)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Turfgrass Management Workshop (120 limit)	
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports Turf Workshop (120 limit)	
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Non-Member Price			
_____ 3-Day Registration with Full-Day Workshop (Includes Tues / Wed Trade Show, Lunches & PAT)	\$210	\$240	\$
_____ Registration for Full-Day Monday Workshop Only (Includes Lunch)	\$155	\$165	\$
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Turfgrass Management Workshop (120 limit)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lawn Care & Landscape Workshop (120 limit)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports Turf Workshop (120 limit)	
_____ 2-Day Registration (Tuesday & Wednesday [Includes Trade Show (both days) & PAT])	\$150	\$160	\$
_____ 1-Day Registration <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday or <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday [Includes Trade Show & PAT]	\$110	\$120	\$
_____ Student Registration (3-Day Pass. Does NOT include PAT) Call for One or Two Day Rates	\$ 55	\$ 60	\$
_____ Trade Show Only (per day) <input type="checkbox"/> Tues <input type="checkbox"/> Wed (Includes Lunch / Does NOT include PAT)	\$ 50	\$ 55	\$
_____ Members ONLY	Members	Members	
_____ Trade Show Only (per day) <input type="checkbox"/> Tues <input type="checkbox"/> Wed (Includes Lunch / Does NOT include PAT)	\$75	\$80	
_____ Non-Members			
_____ Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) ONLY (Wednesday PM, does not include Trade Show)	\$ 50	\$ 55	\$
_____ Iowa GCSA Member Breakfast • Wednesday 6:30 AM	\$ 20	\$ 20	\$
_____ Spouse Registration: <input type="checkbox"/> Monday <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday (Complimentary)	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
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Snow Removal Pricing Strategies

Mike Rorie, Go iTalk

It's that time of year when snow contracts are getting buttoned up and contractors begin praying to the snow gods that there will be some snow removal pricing strategies profitable snow events during the season. After all, a dry winter can be a tough situation to overcome for snow removal contractors. Lack of revenue at a time when there aren't a lot of alternative services to sell only compounds the situation for most companies. So what can snow and ice professionals do so that when (not if) the next dry winter hits they won't be penalized again?

Several things. Snow removal is not as much feast or famine as most people tend to believe. There are a couple of pricing and sale strategies you can try so you won't feel as defeated if it doesn't snow. They worked for me, so hopefully they can work for you too.

Average it Out

Define an average for your snow revenue based on what you have done for the past several years. This is a much more reliable method for forecasting snow income versus using the previous year or your biggest year as your baseline for projected revenue. Using the previous or biggest year totals is simply not advisable.

Looking back three, five, seven and 10 years, if possible, is very insightful. When I ran GroundMasters, we used to look at our revenue trends all the time and would use this average to our advantage with many of our long-term customers.

Put Your Averages to Work

If you have been providing snow services to a client for a number of years (three- to five-year range), consider presenting your average as an annual price for your contract. For example, the first year you billed

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IPLCA Annual Meeting Notice

The IPLCA Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 27, 2016 at 10:45 AM.

\$11,000, the second \$20,000 and the third \$14,000. That adds up to \$45,000. Consider offering \$15,000 a year to service the property and ask for a three-year agreement.

You can determine how to bill this depending on what other services you perform for the customer. This method is typically accepted by your zero-tolerance customers. They understand that contractors have a cost every year to provide snow removal services, and simply taking that average is a logical agreement for both parties.

Maintain your scope of work. When you sell your services like this, your scope should remain the same or else you need to adjust the price to reflect changes in scope. I would, however, suggest adding a blizzard clause to the agreement if you don't have one in your existing scope. Doing so protects both you and the client.

Track your services. Throughout the agreement, you should still track services for this customer just as you would if you were billing for services rendered. This can influence the average that the customer is billed for the next three-year agreement.

Most contractors provide as much service as they can; therefore, these averages should be good numbers for you and the customer—particularly now that you will be managing a fixed-income contract against customer expectations and not “billing as much as I can.”

An annual contract isn't intended to be a win-lose or all-or-nothing agreement. These contracts can be win-win agreements that average your revenue and your customer's costs.

Snow Ready Fees

Another type of agreement you can offer to soften the ups and downs of snow revenue is an annual or monthly snow ready fee, which is designed to have the customer pay something even if it doesn't snow. This can help with cash flow during the winter and also helps with budgeting.

The most common way to structure this is to charge a monthly fee that represents one event or round to the site. If you provide service, the customer has a credit for up to that amount. If the month was dry or uneventful, then you are even. The contractor uses the income to cover the overhead costs of having the equipment ready for a snow event, which is how the sales team can present it to the customer—it's an insurance policy.

Look Out for Yourself

Whatever agreements you come up with for your market and your company, they should never be win-lose. This is not a sustainable business practice for most contractors. I would do everything I could to make snow revenue part of your business, but not something that negatively affects your annual success.

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Snow Removal: Tricks of the Trade

Lynette Von Minden, Turf Magazine

Winter in the Midwest can be brutal. However, when snow removal is a significant part of your business model, a long winter isn't necessarily a bad thing – but it can present many challenges. Eventually, the weather warms and spring returns, and that's the perfect time to take stock, regroup and make any necessary changes. Just ask David Gasaway, owner and president of Gasaway Maintenance Company in Romeoville, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

"After winter ends, we always have a meeting with our office people and equipment operators," Gasaway says. "New ideas and methods come up during the busy winter months that we're not able to address immediately. Everyone has a different opinion, and our end-of-season meeting offers a chance to speak up and be heard. Then, we meet again in a few weeks to discuss any changes we're implementing for the following year. We've been in business a long time, and this works well for us."

Persistency and Consistency

Gasaway has been in the pavement maintenance and snow removal businesses for quite a while – over three decades, in fact. Gasaway started the company a few years after finishing high school in 1974. "I started seal-coating driveways part time when I was in school," Gasaway recalls. "I decided to go into business for myself in 1978. It was a great time to be in the paving business because it was during this time that more fast-food restaurants started adding drive-up windows and we did all of that construction. Since then, we've undergone some name changes and directional changes. In 1992, we incorporated the name

Gasaway Maintenance Company." Nowadays, Gasaway and his team repair storm drains and concrete curbs, patch parking lots and then seal and stripe for a complete turnkey solution. They also remove snow, primarily in Chicago's western suburbs. The company employs around 20 full-time staff members, hiring seasonal workers as needed. As owner and president, Gasaway oversees all the employees: sales, operations and mechanics. While he doesn't operate equipment as much as he once did, Gasaway does still go out into the field to ensure jobs are being handled properly. "I'm a very hands-on person when it comes to running this business," he explains. "It has my name on it, and I take everything we do very seriously. I think the keys to running a successful business are persistency and consistency, and we constantly strive for both."



Gasaway's business has grown over the past few decades, thanks not just to the advent of the

fast food industry, but also because of the big box warehouse complexes that have sprung up along Chicago's I-55 corridor. According to Gasaway, more than 92 million square feet of warehouse space has been developed there over the past 20 years, giving his business a variety of pavement and snow removal jobs throughout the year. "If you have a good relationship, the property manager may assign you to maintain anywhere from five to 10 properties," Gasaway says. "I plowed snow for some properties in 1979 that I'm still plowing today. It comes down to price and quality service."

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Strength and Versatility

The equipment Gasaway uses also makes a big impact on his company's pricing, service and overall productivity. For snow removal, "we currently own four JCB 426 wheel loaders and two JCB 436 wheel loaders," Gasaway says. "We typically lease most of our equipment during snow season. At the end of the lease period, we have the option to buy, if the numbers work out. We either exercise that option or we turn the machines back in and lease them again the following year. On an annual basis, we lease two or three 426 wheel loaders, two or three 436 wheel loaders, six to nine JCB 260 skid-steers and two to four JCB 300 skid-steers."

Gasaway likes these machines because their heavier weights offer more snow-pushing ability, and they can be outfitted with numerous snow removal attachments. The company plows heavier snow using a snow box attachment. Then, when blowing and drifting begin, operators attach the snow blade to clear blocked areas. For transporting snow out of a parking lot, they equip the machine with a bucket and dump the snow into trucks so it can be removed.

Efficiency and Productivity

When you're running multiple machines at various sites, fuel efficiency can be a big deal. And, when operating machines in punishing, cold and windy conditions, no one wants to leave the comfort of a heated cab to fill an empty fuel tank. Gasaway looks for machines that can run for eight hours without being refueled.

Parts availability is also essential because, obviously, accidents happen and machines can break down. Gasaway Maintenance Company prefers to fix any issues as soon as possible.

Whether operating, repairing or maintaining a machine, safety is paramount. No one wants workers to risk injury while performing their jobs. For that reason, Gasaway says that the side-entry door on skid-steers is a concept whose time has come. "Now and then, we end up having to repair parts on our attachments in the field due to the extreme wear and tear we put them through during the winter months," he explains. "With side-entry doors, we can rotate the bucket or blade, step out, repair the part and step right back into the machine. You can't do that with other skid-steers. With other skid-steers, raising the attachment will block the door, so the operator can't get out to make the repair. So, you have to have two guys – one to raise the attachment, the other to fix whatever's wrong – definitely not an ideal situation."

Staying Competitive

In the 35-plus years that his company has been in business, Gasaway has survived three major recessions. The combination of trying to stay competitive while still showing a profit has been a challenge, but thanks to planning and foresight, it's one the company has been able to handle.

"It's amazing how many companies around us 10 years ago are no longer here," Gasaway says. "Every time a recession takes place, banks change their rules, and you have to re-learn everything. That's why I'm so hands-on. You stand back, take an objective look around you, figure out what needs to be fixed, and you fix it. That's what we do, from the way we buy our equipment to how we maintain it to how we service our customers. You offer quality service with quality people and quality equipment – that's the key to our longevity. We're not going anywhere."