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Offshoot

The Official Publication of the California Landscape Contractors Association San Diego Chapter



www.clcasandiego.org



Offshoot
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Marybeth MacNaughton

President's Message

Like it or not, battery-powered equipment is here to stay!

The move to battery-powered equipment is being driven by a number of factors, including concerns about air pollution, noise pollution, and climate change. Gas-powered equipment emits harmful pollutants that can contribute to smog, asthma, and other health problems. It also produces noise that can be disruptive to people and wildlife, and it contributes to climate change by emitting greenhouse gases.

Battery-powered equipment is a cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable alternative. It produces zero emissions, is much quieter than gas-powered equipment, and can be powered by renewable energy sources like solar. It is often lighter and easier to maneuver than gas-powered equipment, with less maintenance too.

California is leading the way in the transition to battery-powered landscape equipment. In 2021, the state passed a law that will ban the sale of new gas-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers starting in 2024. The law will also phase out the sale of new gas-powered portable generators by 2028.

The transition to battery-powered equipment is not without its challenges. One challenge is the cost. Battery-powered equipment can be more expensive than gas-powered equipment. Fortunately the cost is going down as the technology improves. Another challenge is the range of equipment. Battery-powered equipment typically has a shorter range than gas-powered equipment, so it may not be suitable for all applications.

Despite the challenges, the transition is underway with the California CORE Program for Battery-powered Landscape Equipment. The CORE (Clean Outdoor Repowering Equipment) program is a \$30 million program that is helping to accelerate the transition to battery-powered landscape equipment.

How do we take advantage of this program and get our free money? Glad you asked!

CLCA has been at the forefront of getting the word out and educating our members on how to take advantage of the program. There have been two webinars already and they are available for viewing on the CLCA website under Member Resources – CLCA Online. (www.clca.org)

Our vendor partners are also extremely helpful in navigating the process. They can advise you on what equipment you might need and the batteries to operate that equipment. Want to learn more? Our next educational event is June 8 at the Milwaukee Factory Service Center in San Diego. Come and learn about battery-powered equipment options for the pro landscaper and arborist. Hear case studies from commercial landscape companies that have already switched to battery-powered equipment, learn how batteries and motors compare to gas engines (both in pollution and performance), and more! You're not going to want to miss it.

“The earth is what we all have in common.”
-Wendell Berry

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Golfer and sponsor registration has been emailed!
It's also available on our chapter website:
www.clcasandiego.org

**ARE YOU A WINNER?
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2023 Chapter Beautification Awards

Entry forms available at
www.clcasandiego.org.

Entry Deadline is May 19, 2023!
Judging will be June 5-9, 2023.

Winners will be announced at our awards
banquet on September 9 at Bernardo Winery.

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Coming Events

Mark your calendar!

May 9

San Diego Chapter General Meeting, 9 a.m.
All welcome. This will be a virtual meeting.
Email bronwyn@eyescales.net for the link to attend.

May 12

San Diego Chapter Golf Tournament, Twin Oaks.
Twin Oaks: 1425 N. Twin Oaks Valley Road, San Marcos.
Register online at www.clcasandiego.org.

May 19

**San Diego Chapter Beautification Awards
Entry Forms Due.**
Entry forms available online at our website.

June 5-9

San Diego Chapter Beautification Awards Judging.

June 8

**San Diego Chapter Lunch and Learn: Battery
Equipment for the Pro Landscaper and Arborist.**
All welcome. Registration opening soon.
Milwaukee Factory Service Center: 4229 Ponderosa Ave., Ste A.

June 13

San Diego Chapter General Meeting, 9 a.m.
All welcome. This will be a virtual meeting.
Email bronwyn@eyescales.net for the link to attend.

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CLCA Celebrates a Successful Legislative Action Conference

The California Landscape Contractors Association's advocacy efforts were in full swing April 11-12 for the 2023 CLCA Legislative Action Conference.

Big thanks to our participants who traveled to our state capitol in Sacramento to advocate for our industry. Face-to-face conversations with members of the state Senate and Assembly and their staff are the most impactful way to get CLCA's message across to those making decisions. The practice of legislators meeting with constituents to discuss issues of concern is one-on-one lobbying at its finest — lobbying at the grassroots level. Not only are these meetings interesting, but they are also very effective!

California's landscape contractors have one of the widest scopes of work of all the states that license landscape contractors. Why? Because of the consistent advocacy work by CLCA's members, volunteer leaders, staff, and legislative advocate.

In each two-year legislative session, over 2,500 bills are introduced for consideration. We read them, flag them, and track them as we continue our advocacy for landscape contractors.



CLCA on the floor of the state Assembly: Assemblymember Josh Hoover (fifth from left) is joined by CLCA members (pictured left to right) Evan Moffitt, Rick Oropeza, Regan Barry, Megan Rios, Richard Cohen, John McCabe, and Jay Martinez.

You can see those bills by visiting <https://clca.org/advocacy/clca-legislation-center/>.

We are thankful for the CLCA

member companies who supported their employees' interest and effort to be a part of this important event. Their participation was crucial to helping propel our advocacy efforts in 2023.

**CLCA's mission is to serve and protect the interests of its members, promote professionalism, and advance public awareness of the landscape industry.
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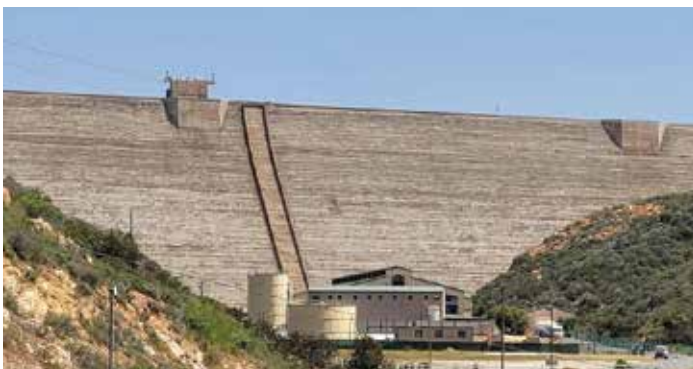
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SDCWA Round Table & Water Treatment Plant Tour on Apr. 19 Draws Large Crowd of Landscapers

The event at the Olivenhain Municipal Water District was well attended by numerous commercial landscape and varied maintenance companies. Attendees enjoyed a light breakfast before participating in a Q&A session with the San Diego County Water Authority on their various incentive programs. The focus of the event was to assist companies in navigating the incentive programs while also collecting feedback on what parts are effective and areas for improvement. Following the roundtable discussion, a group of attendees toured the David C. McCollom Water Treatment Plant. Thank you to all who participated!



~KURAPIA~

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Five Industry Trends to Watch in 2023

By Larry Giroux, Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply

As meteorologists can attest, predicting the future is challenging. With data and feedback from the field, forecasting can be reasonably accurate and provide critical insights for maximizing sunny conditions and preparing to hunker down for a storm.

Green industry experts predict a fairly sunny 2023 season despite concerns about a potential recession, inflation, and lending rates. IBISWorld forecasts the landscape services industry will increase by 3.1% in the coming year. That builds on the average 8.1% increase seen between 2018 and 2022.

Lingering cloudy conditions related to labor shortages, supply chain uncertainty, and gas prices have impacted the perception of the overall health of the industry. In the most recent *Landscape Management State of the Industry Report*, 68% of respondents described the market as “very or relatively healthy,” a 10-point decline from the previous year.

Here’s what you need to know about predictions for the coming year to develop a strategic plan that allows you to maximize the bright spots and prepare for any storms on the horizon.

1. Revenues Up, Profits Down

Lower inflation rates and slightly lower gas prices suggest the industry may experience a less wild ride this year compared to 2022. According to the *Landscape Management Report*, data from The Herring Group’s annual *Benchmark Report* showed that the average growth rate for 2022 was nearly identical to 2021.

Continued growth at that pace indicates substantial opportunities for higher revenues across the next several years. However, respondents to the *Benchmark Report* revealed that while revenues were up by 20%, most companies realized lower profits, with 21% reporting losing money.

In a recent Ewing Customer Survey, contractors said they are focusing on seven key areas to drive profitability:

- Managing projects better.
- Finding new ways to incentivize and retain employees.
- Raising prices.
- Streamlining processes.
- Enhancing training programs.
- Utilizing professional invoicing, cost management, and task scheduling.
- Learning the newer technology in the green industry.

Successful landscape businesses can reach a point where growth slows over time, especially when they specialize. In the coming year, savvy contractors are fueling growth

by increasing sales of existing and new products to both current and new clients.

2. Supply Chain Issues

Expect the U.S. economy to remain volatile. Supply chain issues have somewhat eased, but domestic and international politics can rapidly impact product availability and cost. Flexibility will be vital for sourcing products in a timely and cost-effective fashion. This will be especially true for long-term design-build projects. Educating customers about these challenges and including language in a contract that allows for similar substitutions or price increases can help protect your business from uncertainty.

3. Labor Woes

Staffing remains one of the biggest challenges facing contractors this year. According to the *Irrigation & Lighting 2023 Green Industry Outlook*, 73% of contractors say their region needs more workers to meet company needs.

Rising wages are one factor affecting staffing. Local fast-food establishments and retail outlets advertise starting wages at \$18 per hour for less physically demanding jobs. Landscape contractors report having to raise pay to attract workers to physically demanding positions. Nearly 48% of contractors pay more than \$18 per hour, with 23% paying \$24 or more per hour, according to the *Irrigation & Lighting Report*.

Keeping pace with pay and benefits is only part of the recruitment and retention solution. The hiring market has changed—today’s applicants expect instant feedback via text or email. If you’re not replying quickly, they move on to the next opportunity. Responding in real time can give you a hiring advantage.

Many workers are also seeking career paths. Supporting additional training and licensing, and clearly outlining career development paths can help attract and retain employees.

On the bright side, bringing H-2B workers in to fill hiring gaps should be easier in 2023. In October 2022, the Department of Homeland Security announced an increase in the maximum number of supplemental H-2B visas, allowing for an additional 65,000 seasonal workers.

4. Battery-Powered Equipment is Coming Faster Than Expected

An increasing number of noise ordinances and climate change policies are accelerating the industry’s transition from gas- to battery-powered equipment long-term. It’s no longer a matter of “a few years down the road.”

Continued on next page...

Five Industry Trends to Watch in 2023

...continued from previous page

Landscape companies that have not already begun planning for the switch need to start this year.

Cost concerns associated with the shift are valid. Batteries cost more than gas cans, so having enough power backups on hand to keep crews working is higher than with gas. Theft also is a concern for many landscape contractors—the expense of replacing stolen batteries is essential to consider.

Phasing in battery-operated equipment requires planning. The infrastructure inside your shop will most likely need to be upgraded, with dedicated breakers to handle the additional electrical load.

Educating customers about battery-powered equipment's benefits and limitations will be necessary during the transition. For example, property owners may not realize that some gas-powered tools will continue to be essential for efficiency as battery-powered technology improves.

5. Make Sustainability Part of the Conversation

Water shortages, climate change, soil health, and automation are increasingly on customers' minds. Companies that seize opportunities to offer sustainability-related solutions to residential and commercial clients will gain an edge in keeping pace with changing customer priorities and legislative policies.

Those products and practices often come with a higher price tag for installation and maintenance, which requires communicating with clients so they understand and embrace the need to lessen the environmental impacts of landscape and irrigation.

Becoming the go-to expert on sustainable products related to your services will show clients you're in tune with current events and are using creative options to keep their landscapes in top shape with environmentally friendly options. It will also give you an advantage over your competitors.

This article originally ran on Ewing's blog at www.ewingirrigation.com/news

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Qualified participants may work in sectors of the landscape industry such as:

- Landscape contractors; design, construction, install, or maintenance
- Nursery
- Irrigation and water management specialists
- Tree service providers
- Pest management

Participants are disqualified if they have a personal or professional relationship with the researcher, Chaz Perea.

In exchange for a 90-minute interview (can be done remotely), qualified participants will receive a \$25 In-N-Out gift card.

The interview will focus on how the participant interacts and experiences the business model innovation process:

- how participants define their value proposition to the customer,
- what role they play in delivering customer value,
- how they grow the business while sustaining the existing services,
- and other related questions.

If you know someone who may meet this criteria, please email perea_dissertation_email@yahoo.com.

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Business Smarts: Effectively Partnering with Subcontractors

Subcontractors can help build out your lawn or landscape company's service offerings and/or meet increased customer demand.

While they can be more expensive than your in-house employees, subcontractors bring expertise in their specialty. In some cases, a service like irrigation or tree care may be out of your preferred niche, but partnering with subcontractors allows you to be more of a one-stop shop for clients without having to bring certain offerings in-house.

Subcontractors can also be a solution if you are struggling to find employees with the experience to take on design/build projects that call for skilled tasks like carpentry or masonry.

Keys to Success

If you decide to incorporate subcontractors into your business, it's critical to sufficiently vet the companies you're considering working with. Review their work, call their references, and test their skills. Pay attention to any negative reviews about the subcontractor. Consider how they handled those types of situations. The one who stands behind their work is likely a company you want associated with your business.

Before trusting them on a major project, have them work on one of your smaller jobs so you can see how they work alongside your employees. Your subcontractors should also have the appropriate licensing and insurance. Finding subcontractors who are a good cultural fit also increases the likelihood of your success together.

Hiring credible and qualified subcontractors is important because their work reflects back on your business' reputation. While their good work will benefit you, poor craftsmanship will be credited to you as well.

This is why a contract is essential, as it should clarify your company's quality standards as well as the scope of work, payment schedule, and deadlines. Outline penalties for failing to complete work or meet the agreed-upon timeline. You should also include a provision to terminate the contract if they are not performing an acceptable job.

To ensure they fully understand your standards, go over the contract with them and share your standard operating procedures as well. While ideally, your subcontractor will execute the job correctly, it's still a good idea to



Photo: NALP/Philippe Nobile Photography

make sure you have someone on your staff monitoring the work for quality control.

Even though subcontractors are not your employees, it can foster good will to treat them like part of your team. Make a point to keep them in the loop to help build trust between your two companies. Not only can this help your partnership, but it can also expand your sphere of potential subcontractors as they refer you to others.

Avoid Subcontractor Pet Peeves

Once you've found a dependable, skilled subcontractor, you want to retain them as a go-to option. Two of the main ways to show your respect for your subcontractors are to pay them promptly and be mindful of their schedules.

Often subcontractors complain of not being paid in a timely manner. Rather than making a company wait 30 to 60 days, strive to pay your subcontractors well and on time.

Scheduling is the other main struggle for both landscape companies and subcontractors. While subcontractors may partner with you, they have their own customer base that comes first. Letting them know far in advance when there is a job coming up will make them far more likely to accommodate your needs versus telling them the week of that they're needed on a job.

This article by Jill Odom was originally published on the National Association of Landscape Professionals' blog at <https://blog.landscapeprofessionals.org/>.

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