

JULY 2020

# Offshoot

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



[www.clcasandiego.org](http://www.clcasandiego.org)

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Paradigm shifts are coming. We need to be ready.

Everywhere I go, I run into tradespeople, contractors, sales reps, and distributors, and I'm amazed by how busy everyone is. For some reason, I'm having a tough time matching up the much-reported unemployment numbers with the present conditions I'm seeing in our San Diego landscaping market. Hardscape, softscape, residential, or commercial maintenance, it makes no difference – people are reporting they are busier than ever. This raises a lot of questions:

- Is this a sustainable trend?
- How long can this typical busy season go on this strong?
- Will we keep this kind of momentum going in our region?
- Will we eventually feel the real impact of the pandemic and transition to a local economic crisis? If so, when?
- And the profound question for me is: will I be ready if and when it does transition? How about you?

The point is, while things look busy to us now, big changes – entire paradigm shifts – could be coming. One of the many definitions of a paradigm shift is “a major change in the concepts and practices of how something works or is accomplished.” As a landscaper, that particular definition seems to fit naturally for me.

The term paradigm shift can be applied to science, medicine, economics, or even landscaping (which I feel I understand the most, of course). Now I may be an overpaid ditch digger, but I've learned lessons from past shifts. The last significant shift happened when the mortgage industry collapsed, which collapsed the housing market and nearly took everything I'd dug for. Only twelve years ago, I ignored all the signs and paid dearly. Right now, I'm getting a strong sense that just because it hasn't landed on me yet doesn't mean it's not already here, and this time it might be smart to be better prepared. The takeaway for me today is, maybe you'll get a warning or maybe not, whether it's just or unjust, shift happens. Resist if you want, paradigm shifts occur. They occur for a multitude of reasons. Stevie Wonder could see this one coming like the one before.

It's not just landscaping either, of course. Everyone needs to be aware that paradigm shifts happen. The flooring industry underwent a paradigm shift recently, completely unrelated to external forces or to the pandemic. In the flooring industry just five years ago, wood was king.

Nowadays, vinyl plank flooring is dominating the entire industry, capturing market share in all categories, including premium markets, while virtually destroying wood planking. Tile and carpet may not fade out as much, but the key is to beware of the changes—they come fast.

I have a good friend who explained it well, Robert Chamberlain from A-1 Flooring of San Marcos, California. In this particular shift it was ease of installation which lowered labor

costs, combined with lower material costs and improved versatility. Overall, that meant a highly attractive product that resulted in consumer buy-in and thus cultural buy-in. Massive sales resulted. Efficiency married creativity and that was the result.

What we can learn from this is that we may need that same efficiency and creativity as the paradigm shifts. I know all the more substantial-size companies in the landscape industry have developed mostly refined systems for doing business – they've improved efficiency, and that has more often than not made them successful to varying degrees (sometimes huge). Now we need to be creative too. Landscape contractors, are we charged with any responsibility higher than creative problem solving? This time, are you ready? We may need to be more creative than ever and then some!

Today I'm very grateful for my job as a landscaper and contractor; it feeds my family and feeds my love to be creative and give joy to others!

We can keep this creative joy and be prepared for potential changes on the horizon. Please help somebody today, even a non-member.

Best always! ~Willie

**“One of the many definitions of a paradigm shift is “a major change in the concepts and practices of how something works or is accomplished.”**



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# Coming Events

Mark your calendar!

## Summer TBA

**Beautification Awards Judging.**

*Details coming soon.*

## August 11

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome. Due to health guidelines, this will be a virtual meeting. To attend, email [amy@conradpr.com](mailto:amy@conradpr.com) for the Zoom link.

## September 8

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome. 8:45 a.m. breakfast/networking, 9:15 a.m. meeting. *Mimi's Cafe, 10788 Westview Pkwy, San Diego.*

## October 13

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome. 8:45 a.m. breakfast/networking, 9:15 a.m. meeting. *Mimi's Cafe, 10788 Westview Pkwy, San Diego.*

## October 23

**San Diego Chapter Golf Tournament.**  
*Rancho Bernardo Inn: 17550 Bernardo Oaks Dr., San Diego.*

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# Landscape Industry Certified Exterior Technician Exam Now Available Online

The National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) recently announced that the Exterior Technician exam will now be administered online through a secure, remote proctoring service; giving greater access to the program across all 50 states. This program is designed to cover the technical aspects of exterior landscaping: installation, maintenance and irrigation. It offers the same five (5) practice areas: Hardscape Installation, Softscape Installation, Ornamental Maintenance, Turf Maintenance, and Irrigation.

## Certification Process

- Step 1. Enroll
- Step 2. Purchase Study Materials
- Step 3. Study at Your Own Pace
- Step 4. Take the Exam at Your Convenience

## Study Materials

The Landscape Industry Certified Exterior Technician is a self-study program. You can study using the publications (available in both english and spanish) that can be purchased during the online enrollment process.

## About the Exam

The Technician-Exterior exam has five specialty areas to choose from: Softscape Installation, Hardscape

Installation, Turf Maintenance, Ornamental Maintenance, or Irrigation.

The exam includes the following sections:

### Exam 1: Common Core

- Communication
- Safety and first-aid
- Vehicle operation and safety
- Tools and equipment
- Basic math

### Exam 2: Specialty - Select One

- Softscape Installation
- Hardscape Installation
- Ornamental Maintenance
- Turf Maintenance
- Irrigation

### Exam Fees

NALP Member: Full Exam: \$445/ Non-Member: \$545  
Exam fees include enrollment and proctor fees.

Learn more and enroll for the exam at [https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/LP/Learn/Certification/Exterior\\_Technician/LP/Certification/exterior.aspx](https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org/LP/Learn/Certification/Exterior_Technician/LP/Certification/exterior.aspx)




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# Landscape Industry Certified Exterior Technician Specialty Exam Details



## Softscape Installation

125 questions/135 minutes

- Common Core
- Softscape Plan Reading
- Softscape Horticultural Principles
  - Cultural Requirements, Grading and Drainage Principles, Soil Amendment Methods, Planting Methods, Mulching Methods, Fertilization, Pruning Methods, Plant Preservation, Plant Removal, Minimizing Plant Erosion, Plant and Environmental Identification, Sod Installation, Mulch Application
  - Tree Planting: Preparation, Placement, Backfilling, Staking and Transplanting
  - Irrigation System Components: Basic Program Controllers, Lateral Repair, Head Adjustments
- Equipment and Tools
  - Fertilizer Equipment
  - Skid-Steer
  - Rototiller

*NOTE: The Softscape Installation exam includes questions on plant identification and environmental sensitivities. The questions are regional-specific.*

## Hardscape Installation

90 questions/120 minutes

- Common Core
- Hardscape Plan Reading
- Hardscape Principles and Calculations
  - Site demolition, Excavating and Grading. Knowledge of: Soil Structure, Aggregates, Paving Materials, Basic Wall Construction, Basic Landscape Carpentry Materials, Fasteners, Low voltage Lighting Standards and Regulations
  - Skill in Installation of: Sub-Surface Drainage systems, Base Material Compaction, Aggregate, Paving Material, Wall Material, Lighting systems, Site Amenities, Water Features
- Equipment and Tools
  - Chainsaw
  - Skid-Steer

## Irrigation

75 questions/100 minutes

- Common Core
- Irrigation Plan Reading
- Irrigation Components and Principles
  - Basic Electricity and Underground Wiring, Hydraulics, Soil Types, Controllers and Remote Control Valves, Pressure Loss, Elevation Change and PSI, Velocity and Surge, Water Delivery Methods
- Irrigation Methods and Procedures
  - Installation of: Pipes and Fittings, Mounting and Wiring of: Connections, Controllers and Valves. Backfilling and Compacting, Flushing, Nuzzling and Sprinkler Head Adjustments, Electrical and Hydraulic Troubleshooting, Damaged Component Replacement and Repair, Winterizing
- Equipment and Tools
  - Trenchers and Pipe pulling equipment
  - Control Programming

## Ornamental Maintenance

125 Questions/135 Minutes

- Common Core
- Irrigation Components and Principles
- Ornamental Maintenance Horticultural Principles
  - Cultural Needs, Tree Planting, Pruning, Pest Management, Top Dressing and Mulching, Plant Protection, Growing Media, Plant and Environmental Identification, Plant Installation, Basic Program Controller, Head Adj.
- Ornamental Maintenance Calculations
- Equipment and Tools
  - Chainsaw
  - Pest and Disease Equipment
  - Pruning Tools

*NOTE: The Ornamental Maintenance exam includes questions on plant identification and environmental sensitivities. The questions are regional-specific.*

## Turf Maintenance

90 questions/120 minutes

- Common Core
- Irrigation Components and Principles
- Turfgrass Maintenance Principles
  - Sod Installation, Cultural Requirements, Watering Requirements, Pest Management, Adjusting pH, Fertility, Basic Program Controller, Head Adjustments
- Turfgrass Maintenance Calculations
- Equipment and Tools
  - Mowing
  - Aeration
  - Dethatching
  - Edging
  - Trimming



# CLCA Associate Members Offer Webinars and Online Training

Many CLCA Associate Members offer free online training videos and webinars. Find details below and check them out. Now is the time to increase your knowledge and expertise!

## Arborjet

From soil to crown, Arborjet offers educational opportunities on topics spanning the green industry. Over the next several months, Arborjet will be offering additional remote learning opportunities with webinars ranging from new product sessions to important regional pest and disease updates. View webinars at <https://arborjet.com/training/webinars/>

## Ewing Irrigation and Landscape Supply

All classes are posted at <https://store.ewingirrigation.com/education-webinars>. Ewing also has a Youtube channel. Check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/user/ewingirrigation>.

## Hunter Industries

Hunter Industries' online training program has been online for more than eight years and has worked with many professional organizations to refine their training to industry standards. Any user can take the training by signing up for a free Hunter account. Visit their training page at <https://training.hunterindustries.com/>

## LMN

LMN has outstanding resources to help CLCA members learn the software skills to grow their landscape business and career. Visit <https://golmn.com/resources/> to learn more. Also, their free one-day workshops have gone virtual. Find more info at <https://golmn.com/workshops/>. Lastly, they're now offering free webinars each week that include tips from landscape industry experts and LMN's CEO. Check it out at <https://golmn.com/webinars/>.

## Rain Bird

The Rain Bird Knowledge Center has recently been updated with 23 NEW training videos. They are short, contain the top three selling features for each product, and star Rain Bird sales employees!

Distributors: <https://info.rainbird.com/t/4HQY-9WSP-5B1H06REB6/cr.aspx?v=0>

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## Trex Fencing

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## San Diego Chapter Member Milestones

Congratulations to the following companies for reaching membership milestones this month.

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### 18 Year Member

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### 8 Year Member

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### 1 Year Members

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# Duty-Free Meal Period

By Steven Cesare, Ph.D., The Harvest Group

A business owner from Florida called me the other day to talk about multiple timekeeping issues including drive time, overtime, and meal periods. During our conversation, the owner described the standard meal period process which usually involved a work crew stopping their work at around noon, driving to a fast-food restaurant in a company vehicle to get something to eat, returning to the job site to finish eating their meal, and then resuming work at approximately 12:30 p.m.

First, it is important to note that the Fair Labor Standards Act does not require employers to provide meal periods or rest breaks to employees. Rather, the individual states determine their own unique standards for non-exempt employee meal periods and rest breaks. To the point at hand, the state of Florida places only mild restrictions on employers' meal period policies.

In general, meal periods are usually more than 20 minutes long, requiring employees to be relieved of all work responsibilities (i.e., "duty-free"). If those criteria are met, the meal period represents unpaid time.

The issue with the Florida business owner is that she told me that her non-exempt employees typically drive a company vehicle to the fast-food restaurant for lunch and that she does not pay them for that time since they are not "working." Technically, while they are not "working," the non-exempt employees are still under

the control of the company since they are in a company vehicle. The general rule is that non-exempt employees must be paid for all time they are under the employer's control. To be unpaid time, non-exempt employees must be relieved of all work responsibilities, beyond all employer control, thereby enabling them to act on their own accord (e.g., cell phone use, smoking, exercise, eating, listening to music). That defines a "duty-free" meal period which does not require paid time.

Even though the employer is not forcing the employees to go the fast-food restaurant, simply by them being in a company vehicle places them under employer control. For example, if the company vehicle gets into an accident with several employees being injured, by the very nature of them being in a company vehicle the company may likely be partially responsible for those injuries. By way of contrast, if the same employees took an Uber or an employee's personal vehicle to the fast-food restaurant and got into an accident, the company would not likely be held responsible.

As I explained to the Florida owner, if the employees stopped working at noon, and drove 15 minutes to the fast-food restaurant in a company vehicle, the employees must be paid for those 15 minutes, which may impact weekly overtime pay.

Likewise, to be legally conservative, I recommended that the owner institute a payroll policy of requiring each non-exempt employee (e.g., field as well as office employees) to document the beginning time and end time of their daily meal periods on their timesheets. Failure to track this daily meal period can lead to a "working off the clock" violation that can be very costly. Furthermore, I recommended that the owner add the following language to the Meal Period Policy in the Employee Handbook: "It is important to note that the meal period begins when the employee stops working, not when he/she begins to eat."

*If you have any questions about this topic or anything else related to human resources, call Steve at (760) 685-3800.*

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# CLCA Pauses, Looks Forward to Hawaii Convention in 2021

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities presented by the fluid nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CLCA Board of Directors has postponed the association's annual convention in Hawaii until 2021 and stepped up efforts to innovatively offer members online education, resources, and networking.



“With the health and well-being of our community in mind and following the guidance of local government and public health officials, CLCA is reconfiguring its 2020 Annual Convention,” CLCA President Regan Barry said.

“We’re taking these steps to proactively protect those most valuable to us – our families, our colleagues, and our staff. CLCA board members look forward to safely joining them in Hawaii in 2021, after we celebrate our 2020 successes online,” he added.

“The opportunities to stay connected are even greater today, even from a distance.” Regan said. “Networking, education, and social events — CLCA’s chapters bring the association’s resources directly to you.”

“Our 2020 Annual Convention will feature everything that members have come to expect: The excitement of setting the future of our association at the General Membership meeting, the celebration of landscaping excellence at the Trophy Awards, and the opportunity to connect with old friends and make new friends,” he explained.

CLCA’s 2020 successes include a continued focus on working with state and local governments and public health officials to keep CLCA members informed and on the job providing essential services.

As the association plans a reconfigured 2020 Annual Convention, General Membership Meeting, and Trophy Awards ceremony, efforts are also underway for enhanced virtual networking opportunities and educational offerings, including a weekly webinar series scheduled to start in September.

Regan also encouraged members to stay active in their local chapters, which he called “the hearts of the association.”

Until then, stay safe!

CLCA MEMBER ADVANTAGE

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# CLCA San Diego Chapter Life Members

Thank you to the following Life Members for their continued support of the association.

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# 25+ Year CLCA San Diego Chapter Members

Thanks to the following Chapter Members for their continued support for over 25 years.

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