

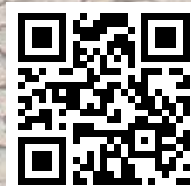
NOVEMBER 2021

# Offshoot

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

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

Offshoot  
P.O. Box 242  
Beaumont, CA 92223



Cover Photo:  
2021 President's Award  
winning project, Beautifully  
Blue Backyard, by multi  
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## President's Message

*Willie Valdez*



A recent life experience allowed me to reflect on the emotional benefits of good landscaping.

There I sat near the entrance of a major regional hospital, somewhat deflated for a multitude of reasons... mostly because I had a loved one inside who was having a very serious surgery. My anxiety was abnormally high, and the craziest thoughts were coming into mind. I tried to control myself and at least tone down my thoughts; I tried reading a book at first, then surfing the net, but nothing worked.

In this moment, a much-needed mental exercise allowed me to reflect on all the incredible entries in the recent Beautification Awards. Thinking deeper, beyond the impression they make at first glance, and combining my personal experience, made me realize how much effort is really behind these projects. During the awards presentation, we see the stunning photos that showcase the themes and architectural concepts with incredibly crafted hardscapes married together with intensely rich plantings and beautiful tree placements, typically beyond our imaginations.... but really there is so much more to it.

As the scheduled procedure went from the expected 1-to-1 1/2 hours into 5 1/2 hours, speculative thoughts were running rampant. With the Beautification Awards as context, at last a thought came to me that I could use: could a beautifully landscaped garden help me find some peace?

Having what felt like an eternity of time, I walked the entire grounds. In this fragile state, I realized the obvious: a walk in a landscaped garden could change the way I felt. I thought about it even more, and yes of course it absolutely could and did bring calmness. Evoking

emotion so powerful, it could change my frame of mind, which was exactly what I was looking for. As I took in the grounds, my mind slowed. I found a peacefulness that I knew existed but was hiding from me, and I began to hear birds singing again. Funny thing – they were there all the time.

As I slowly walked around, I reverted to myself and I found clarity, the clarity I needed to find peace and serenity. I let go of the emotional flows that were tugging and I could see the beauty as it was intended. While my heart was trembling at all levels, the fear was washing away, the calmness was pouring over my fears. The saying that “minor” surgery is the surgery someone else is having became funny again, as it was intended. The garden walk had made me well.

During the Beautification Awards, that's what I think and feel as each photo is presented—it's more than just an emotional evocation: it's a transformative experience. I imagine being there and feeling what the experience changes in me. The feeling and the knowing that all is ok, maybe not perfect but it's all what we allow ourselves to see as we travel forward. That's what I love about landscape work: no matter what you're doing, you have the chance to produce a quality that, if done right, no one will ever know or notice that it's been done to improve their moment as they pass through it. It's the same moment I have during that second or two when I see those beautiful entry photos. Feeling better all the time and not even knowing why. And so, I give thanks to all the great landscaping all around us.

Happy Thanksgiving! ~Willie

P.S. The patient, my wife, is well on the road to being a cancer survivor. Thank you, Lord.



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## Celebrate the Season at the San Diego Chapter Holiday Party!

Join us at...

**STONE BREWING**  
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**Thurs., Dec. 9, 2021**  
**5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**



Celebrate the holidays with your green industry friends at the CLCA San Diego Chapter Holiday Party at Stone Brewing World Bistro and Gardens in Escondido, one of the premier culinary destinations in San Diego County.

Plan to bring your holiday cheer, sporting your ugliest holiday sweater, and be ready for a really fun time. The ugliest sweater will win a cool prize! This year we'll also be accepting non-perishable food item donations for the San Diego Food Bank. Help us provide food for our neighbors in need this holiday season! Register online at [www.clcasandiego.org](http://www.clcasandiego.org).

## 2022 Coming Events

Mark your calendar!

### January 11

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome.

### February 17

**San Diego Chapter Kickoff Mixer.** Location TBD.

### March 8

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome.

### April 12

**San Diego Chapter General Meeting.** All welcome.

### May 13

**San Diego Chapter Golf Tournament, Twin Oaks.**

We're also working to organize tours of the Wild Animal Park and Waterwise Botanicals Nursery Plant in the spring of 2022. Details coming soon!

# 2022 Annual Sponsorship Commitment Form

Annual Sponsorship Level		Platinum \$2,500	Gold \$1,850	Diamond \$1,300	Ruby \$350	Contractor \$750 Contractor Members Only!
Company Name and Logo in <i>Offshoot</i> , on Chapter Website and all General Meeting Emails with hot link	Priceless	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recognition at all Chapter Events on Sponsor Banner	Priceless	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sponsorship of Beautification Award Plaque	\$650	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes**
Hole Sponsorship at Golf Tournament	\$225	Yes	-	-	-	-
Advertising Discount in <i>Offshoot</i> (cannot be used in conjunction with other discounts)	Dependent on Use	10%	5%	-	-	-
Golf Tournament Player(s)	\$185	4	2	1	-	1
Kick Off Dinner Ticket(s)	\$85	2	2	1	1	1
Beautification Awards Dinner Ticket(s)	\$150	2	2	2	-	2
Holiday Dinner Ticket(s)	\$105	4	2	1	1	1

\*\*Contractor receives one entry into Beautification Awards competition in lieu of award plaque sponsorship.

Contact Bronwyn Miller at (949) 466-1222 with questions.

## 2022 CLCA San Diego Chapter Sponsor Form

1. Please complete and return this form by Jan. 14, 2022 with written sponsorship commitment to: CLCA San Diego, c/o Cecily Gordon - Grace Gordon Designs, P.O. Box 181271, Coronado, CA 92178
2. Please remit your check\* made payable to CLCA San Diego Chapter by Jan. 31, 2022 or sooner to: CLCA San Diego, c/o Cecily Gordon - Grace Gordon Designs, P.O. Box 181271, Coronado, CA 92178

**We MUST receive your commitment by January 14, 2022 to put your name on the sponsor banner.**

The San Diego Chapter of the California Landscape Contractors Association has my support.  
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Contact Bronwyn Miller at (949) 466-1222 with questions.

\*If desired, payment may be divided into three equal payments due January 15, March 15, and May 31, 2022.



# Toro Announces New Revolution Series of Battery-Powered Commercial Lawncare Equipment

Z Master® Revolution, Grandstand® Revolution, and Z Master® 7500-D 144” join Toro lineup

Toro recently introduced three new products designed to meet the evolving demands of landscape contractors. Joining Toro’s leading lineup are the new Revolution Series of battery-powered commercial lawncare equipment, the Z Master® and the Grandstand® Revolution, and a new Z Master 7500-D with a massive 144-inch cutting deck.

“The new Z Master Revolution and Grandstand Revolution take two of Toro’s beloved mower platforms and revolutionizes them with lithium-ion battery power technology that will outlast the sun,” said Chris Vogtman, director of marketing at Toro. “We’re also excited to introduce the new Z Master 7500-D 144”, which helps landscapers make easy work of large amounts of acreage. Plus, all the new equipment comes Horizon360™ capable, which is a real advantage for creating business efficiencies.”

Every Revolution machine is equipped with patent-pending software in the controls that enables smooth operation. It also gives operators a chance to customize the machine with adjustable deck rake, drive speed control options, and blade tip speed settings.

The Revolution Series mowers are powered by Toro’s HyperCell Power System™, which was specifically designed with the same innovative spirit Toro has applied for more than a century to its equipment, and delivers all day power and reliability. The Battery Management System (BMS) allows for longer run times and quick charging to maximize productivity. HyperCell is built to run cooler than other power systems, so it can last as long as the sunlight. Ultimately, operators gain efficiencies, cut down on emissions, and can complete more jobs with less hassle.

## Grandstand® Revolution



The Toro GrandStand Revolution stand-on mower is a powerful machine designed for high performance and professional lawncare pros focused on optimizing their businesses with the next generation of landscaping equipment. It’s the same ride you’ve come to trust with its space-saving, flip-up platform, only now its powered by Toro’s durable HyperCell batteries.

Featuring a Turbo Force deck with adjustable baffle, operators can adjust the deck baffle to get the most pristine cut in any conditions. The Turbo Force deck is a 50 KSI 7-gauge high strength steel deck, complemented with an extra strength tubular chassis and durably rugged I-beam front-end. It also features

industry-leading dual capture anti-scalp rollers to ensure the highest quality of cut in the harshest terrain. Discharge and disperse clippings with the industry’s highest IQ system—rubber discharge chute clears obstacles, while debris dispersion is second to none.

Rough bumps and challenging terrain are all in a day’s work. Feeling them shouldn’t have to be. The Toro GrandStand Revolution combines the speed and comfort of a zero-turn rider with the on-and-off ease of a wide area walk-behind — creating a fast, maneuverable and more productive alternative to meet your quiet, battery-powered, efficient mowing needs.

## Z Master® Revolution



The past and present just became the future with the new Toro® Z Master® Revolution zero-turn mower. It is big, bad, and battery-powered.

Built on Toro’s commercial-grade Z Master 4000 Series frame and legendary Turbo Force® deck, the new Toro Z Master Revolution offers robust battery-powered go-all-day comfort with Toro’s patented MyRIDE® suspension system. The suspended operator platform and easy to adjust, personalized ride settings maximize comfort. All day run time from Toro’s HyperCell Power System seals the deal.

## Z Master 7500-D 144”



Toro’s Z Master 7500-D is known to keep crew numbers to a minimum and productivity up — and now

*Continued on next page...*

# Toro's New Battery-Powered Lawncare Equipment

...Continued from previous page

Toro is taking its grass-kicking capacity to a whole other level with a new 144" cutting deck.

The new Z Master 7500-D 144" adapts automatically to changing terrain on the fly by choosing the right operating mode for the conditions with Toro's Horizon™ technology. The Horizon onboard intelligence platform enhances the performance of the machine in various mowing conditions, and protects the mower by monitoring engine oil temperature and pressure. You'll save fuel costs while maintaining top-level performance.

The massive mowing deck can fold its wings up to 83 inches, allowing it to fit on most standard trailers. The wings flex up to 20 degrees and down to 15 degrees, which hug the ground as you mow, giving you a pro-quality cut on uneven terrain.

Built to last with a protective engine hood, bullnose bumper, 250-lb. Warner® clutch and a 7-gauge deck, the new Z Master 7500-D 144" will get the job done for a long time to come.

## Horizon360™



The best thing about the three new Toro products is that they all come Horizon360 capable. Toro's new business software for landscape contractors drives more profits and increases business efficiency and effectiveness.

This powerful, new, all-in-one software suite allows landscape contractors to more effectively track the productivity of their crews and equipment, automate their billing process, and enhance the time management of their businesses. Horizon360 also offers proof of service, job notes and office notes, real-time equipment tracking and a bi-lingual phone app for managing scheduling, weather events, and multiple crews.

For more information about new equipment offerings from Toro, visit [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com).

## San Diego Chapter Member Milestones

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

### 24 Year Member

H.A. Casillas Landscape

### 23 Year Members

Agri Service

M. C. Land Construction

### 22 Year Member

Aztec Landscaping

### 21 Year Member

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# Focus on the Behaviors, Not the Number

By Steven Cesare, Ph.D., Harvest Landscape Consulting

A landscaper from Pennsylvania called me the other day to discuss appropriate methods for coaching employees on how to achieve their work goals. Being an avowed capitalist, my initial point on this topic surprised the landscaper. In specific, I told her that as long as the employee knows the empirical goal (e.g., gross margin percentage, enhancements to maintenance contract ratio, DSO, job quality score, overtime to hours quotient, client retention), the feedback should focus exclusively on the behaviors the employee must perform to reach the specific goal, rather than the goal itself (i.e., 53% Gross Margin, 87 Job Quality Score, 92% Client Retention, 85% Annual Foreman Retention Rate).

The goal is not going to change. So, why focus on it? We already know the goal. It's not the number that is important. It's the actual behaviors that must be performed to reach the number that are important.

"But Steve, we have to get the number! As a capitalist, you must certainly understand that!" Of course, I do. We all do.

As I explained to the Pennsylvania landscaper, if her employees achieved the goal through illegal, immoral, or unethical means, would she approve of their actions? Without missing a beat, she forthrightly responded "No."

Similarly, would she approve if her daughter cheated on collegiate exams, or paid someone to take a class for her, or contracted with a service to draft a term paper for her, in order to maintain a scholarship. Again, the response was "No."

We know the goal; we know the number; that is static information. The behaviors are the dynamic variables that can be altered to produce differential productivity levels, eventuating in "best practices." Thus, let's focus on coaching employees to consistently achieve those best practices.

For example, to achieve a goal of 45% gross margin on a landscape maintenance job, it would make sense to coach the following behaviors: walk the job to ensure an accurate estimate, track crew hourly average wage, minimize wasted time through inefficient routing circles, have GPS on the company vehicles to see if the crew makes any unnecessary morning stops prior to reaching the first job site of the day, perform efficient job

sequencing, have a current rotation map, have properly-maintained equipment and a fully-trained staff, minimize unnecessary materials costs (e.g., waste, on-call orders), never doing any unproductive work (i.e., walking to/from the truck empty-handed), and of course, no overtime.

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**"It's not the number that is important. It's the actual behaviors that must be performed to reach the number that are important."**

---

If the Foreman failed to perform any of those duties, or did them inefficiently, it is likely that the goal would not be attained. Thus, all related action plans, documentation, and coaching should focus exclusively on the correct behaviors and their proper execution, not the numerical goal. The goal is not going to change. But the behaviors, which are under the control of the employee (i.e., Foreman) can be improved due to better training, follow-up, and accountability.

We agree: The goal is important!

That said, be a better coach by focusing the employee's attention on how the right behaviors must be performed better, rather than just restating the urgency of "getting the number." Focus on the behaviors, not the number.

**~KURAPIA~**

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# The Art of Raising Rates



U.S. inflation hit a 30-year high in October, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Couple this with the need to raise employees' wages to stay competitive and your gross profit margins have probably been shrinking for a while now.

While talking to customers about your increased rates may be daunting, it is an absolute must if your lawn care or landscape company still wants to make a profit and stay in business. Greg Herring, owner of The Herring Group, says not raising your prices is one of the fundamental reasons why landscape companies have poor profitability.

"Landscapers need to raise prices because employees' wages have been increasing significantly for several years," Herring says. "More recently, the cost of materials and fuel have increased significantly. The USA has experienced very low inflation since 1983. That means that people younger than 38 have never lived in an inflationary economy. It's not

only important for landscapers to raise prices; it is also important for them to explain why they are raising their prices."

## How Often Should You Raise Your Rates

Kevin Kehoe, founder of Aspire, says you should train your customers to expect that like every other service and product they purchase, landscape services are subject to the laws of inflation and they pay for that. He adds that if owners haven't been doing it already, they should be raising their rates yearly.

"Yes, there are multiyear contracts, but they too should have escalators based on inflation and in some cases purchase history – as in the more extras they buy the lower the inflation rate might be," Kehoe says.

Meanwhile, Herring suggests only raising rates in the years when workers will expect a raise. When you calculate how much to raise your rates by, Herring says they should

be raised by the same percentage that crew wages are increasing.

Kehoe says you should take into account the average wage rate per hour, the average percentage of overtime paid to crews and overhead as a percent of total hours sold.

## Communicating New Rates

Once you've calculated your new rates, there's the task of letting your customers know. You may be concerned that you'll lose a lot of your clients by raising your rates and this may be what has prevented you from doing so in the past.

Kehoe says it's likely you won't lose a lot of customers, and there are a number of woefully unprofitable clients that you should lose.

"There is no reason for landscapers to serve customers with really low gross margins," Herring says. "The price increases for these customers should be done all at once. For customers with low gross margins, it would be better to lose them if they do not agree to the new price."

Kehoe says it is important to take into account the total customer 'book of business' profitability as there may be one or two properties that are low margin in a portfolio.

Herring says the messaging should be relevant to the customer type and you should link the price increase to what they have experienced personally.

*Continued on next page...*

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# The Art of Raising Rates

...Continued from previous page

“There is a lot of coverage of inflation in the media,” Herring says. “People experience inflation when they go to the grocery store and gas station. Landscapers should tie their price increases to what their customers are likely experiencing.”

Kehoe says the message should convey how you deliver great work to loyal customers, but quality is priceless in a sense and like everyone else, prices go up.

An example of a landscape professional who had to put this in practice is Loriena Harrington, owner of Beautiful Blooms, LLC, based in Menomonee Falls, WI.

Harrington typically communicates with her clients in a causal newsletter about how the season is going so in the spring they were already aware of Beautiful Blooms’ labor situation. In July, she had to send out a mass email to 240 clients about adding an 8.5 percent surcharge to their invoice for the remainder of the season.

This was to account for the mid-season wage increase she was giving her existing staff and to attract more applicants. Also, materials and delivery fees needed to be compensated for as they were all on the rise. Harrington explained this in the letter and ended it with this:

“You made a choice and hired us for a reason – you believe that Beautiful Blooms provides great service and excellence in horticulture. We deliver on what we say we will do, and we do not cut corners to save on expense. We promise to continue to do just that. Your Beautiful Blooms Team is working incredibly hard for you right now and we appreciate your loyalty.”

Harrington also drafted a pre-written response in case of pushback, where she elaborated on the reasons driving the decision and clarified the surcharge was not a ‘money grab’ in any way.

Out of the 240 clients, two individuals canceled their contract while around 15-20 sent responses of understanding. Three clients even sent actual thank you letters, thanking Harrington for being responsible and doing what she felt was necessary to maintain a quality workforce and grow it.

The bottom line is, there is no ‘easy’ time to raise prices. However, it is necessary and now with the supply chain shortages and labor challenges, price increases are expected and understood more readily by customers.

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

## Karen Hill Joins Currier Plant Brokering Services

Currier Plant Brokering Services is pleased to welcome Karen Hill to their sales team. Karen brings with her many years of nursery and customer relations experience from Miramar Wholesale Nurseries and Evergreen Nursery.



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You can contact Karen via her cell phone (858) 413-5411 or email [Karenstillhill@outlook.com](mailto:Karenstillhill@outlook.com) to find out how Currier Plant Brokering may assist you!

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

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

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