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

www.clcasandiego.org

Offshoot P.O. Box 242 Beaumont, CA 92223

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Cover Photo: Ampersand by 2023 multi awardwinning contractor LaBahn's Landscaping.

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President's Message

The CLCA Convention held in Monterey from a November 8-11 was a delightful blend of professional development and camaraderie against the backdrop of Monterey's beautiful weather.

The festivities commenced on Wednesday with a warm Welcome Reception hosted by Hunter/FX Luminaire, creating an inviting atmosphere for attendees to kickstart their networking journey. Thursday continued the momentum with the invigorating Breakfast of Champions, setting the stage for insightful sessions on Succession Planning and Marketing, addressing key aspects of the industry's future. Friday brought together members from various segments with meetings catering to the General Membership, Associates, and Auxiliaries. The evening reached its zenith with the Trophy Awards ceremony, complemented by a delectable filet mignon dinner. This elegant affair perfectly balanced professional recognition and connection-building, creating an environment where participants could forge



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new relationships while appreciating the scenic wonders of Monterey. Saturday's golf event under the sunny skies provided a relaxed setting for connecting with old friends and cultivating new connections, a fitting end to a convention that seamlessly integrated education, celebration, and leisure.

<u>Marubeth MacNaughton</u>

Heartfelt thanks were extended to all sponsors whose support played a crucial role in making this gathering a resounding success. ~Marybeth

Photos from convention will be published in next month's Offshoot.





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Sponsorship of Beautification Award Plaque	\$675	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes**
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**Contractor receives one entry into Beautification Awards competition in lieu of award plaque sponsorship.

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

2024 CLCA San Diego Chapter Sponsor Form

- 1. Please complete and return this form by Jan. 14, 2024 with written sponsorship commitment to: CLCA San Diego, c/o Eyescapes, 16769 Bernardo Center Dr, Ste 242, San Diego, CA 92128
- 2. Please remit your check* made payable to CLCA San Diego Chapter by Jan. 31, 2024 or sooner to: CLCA San Diego, c/o Eyescapes, 16769 Bernardo Center Dr, Ste 242, San Diego, CA 92128

We MUST receive your commitment by January 14, 2024 to put your name on the sponsor banner.

The San Diego Chapter of the California Landscape Contractors Association has my support. For the 2024 calendar year, I/we are committing to be sponsors at the following level (please check one):

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

*If desired, payment may be divided into two equal payments due January 15 and March 15, 2024.



November 30, 2023

San Diego Chapter Holiday Party, 5 p.m.

Celebrate the holidays with your green industry friends at the CLCA San Diego Chapter Holiday Party. Plan to bring your holiday cheer and be ready for a fun time. Register at www.clcasandiego.org.

Amalfi Cucina Italiana: 1035 La Bonita Drive, San Marcos.

January 9, 2024

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

February 13, 2024

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

February 15, 2024

San Diego Chapter Tour of Native West Nursery. Save the date and plan to attend this native plant presentation and nursery tour.

February 22, 2024

San Diego Chapter Kickoff Mixer. More information coming soon.





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Ways to Express Appreciation to Your Team



You know you wouldn't be where you are today without your team, but do they know you feel this way? It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and assume your staff understands how much you appreciate the hard work they put in every day.

However, leaders with strong company cultures will tell you it is important to express your gratitude to your employees often and in a manner of different ways.

"When people feel that their efforts are valued, they experience greater job satisfaction, have a stronger desire to show up for work every day and give it their all, push themselves to the next level and stay with an organization for the long haul," says Courtney Pohlit, director of human resources for Ruppert Landscape, based in Laytonsville, Maryland.

Share Praise

It can seem simplistic, but do not overestimate the power of praising your team. You can do this by personally thanking employees or sharing positive customer feedback.

"When we have wins as a team, it's important to recognize those who contributed to our success," says Shayne Newman, president of YardScapes Landscape Professionals, based in New Milford, Connecticut. "As landscapers, we are driven by our love for the outdoors as well as our desire to please our clients. It feels good when we know we have made our clients happy. So, it's important to recognize that our employees are motivated by knowing that they have made someone happy."

You can also recognize your team for a job well done by giving out various company awards.

"Every month, we recognize the Gardner of the Month and Supervisor of the Month; each receives a gift card," says Leigh Townsend, president of J.W. Townsend Landscapes, based in Charlottesville, Virginia. "We also recognize crew members by giving out two preferred parking spots. The gift cards and parking spots are given to staff who have delivered a high-quality product and/or customer experience."

Provide Rewards

Another common way to show your appreciation to your team is

with various rewards. This could be randomized like going out and treating your crews to ice cream on a hot day or more structured through profit sharing.

Even if profit sharing is a little too involved for your operations, providing end-of-the-year bonuses can show you acknowledge your team's effort to the company's overall success. Some companies use the holidays to gift their team members with turkeys for Thanksgiving and hams for Christmas.

"The holiday giveaways also seem to hit the heart," says Brian Mark, owner and president of CMS Landscape, based in Pocasset, Massachusetts. "I would never diminish the impact of the bonus program though, very powerful."

Giving team members gift cards in recognition of various good practices, such as stepping up in the face of a challenge, demonstrating safe operations or constantly having a positive attitude can show you are paying attention.

Host Team Gatherings

Team gatherings can serve as a time to celebrate your company's wins and your staff's dedication. These can be as simple as monthly or quarterly cookouts or more elaborate holiday gatherings at a special location.

"If you are going to host an event, do it right and make it fun," says Julie Patronik, marketing and creative director at McHale Landscape Design, Inc., based in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. "Invest the time and money which ultimately help to build your corporate culture. Hire the band. Invite the families. Hire a photographer. Capture the memories."

Continued on next page...

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Ways to Express Appreciation to Your Team

...Continued from previous page

Not only do team members get to enjoy your appreciation, these types of events can also help with your overall camaraderie.

"We've made a practice of getting out our calendars at the beginning of each year and making a plan for a few fun, team-building activities so that we're committed to them," says Phil Key, CEO of Ruppert Landscape. "But we also take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves throughout the year for impromptu celebrations and thank yous. Life is too short to not have some fun!"

Offer Additional Time Off

Many team members value quality time with their families and gifting your team with additional time off as a thank you can be incredibly meaningful. Providing extra time off can also allow your team to recuperate after a demanding season.

This could be a formalized system where employees can earn points they can later cash in for more PTO or something more casual where you give the team a half day or a day off as you are able.

"How people show gratitude is, in my opinion, probably not going to be the same from company to company," says Bret Achtenhagen, president of Bret Achtenhagen's Seasonal Services based in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. "Your company has a culture, it has a personality, and your methods of showing gratitude should be consistent with that culture."

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

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Wage And Hour Lawsuit

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

A business owner from California called me the other day to talk about a letter he received from the lawyer of a former non-exempt employee. We have all been there; it's never good news. The employee was recently terminated for not meeting performance expectations which were very well documented. That said, it appears that after the former employee completed his paperwork at the local Unemployment Office, he naturally stopped by a lawyer's office to file a wage and hour lawsuit against his previous employer.

First things first, "Yes," the business owner has \$1,000,000 of Employment Practices Liability Insurance (EPLI) coverage, as well as the Wage and Hour Add-on, which addresses many of these allegations and sundry other Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) features.

Next, of course I realize this claim comes from the most employer-phobic state in the union. I know this, because I am an inmate; I mean, I still live here. Thus, while certain differential state law nuances obviously exist, I thought it would be useful to share some of the overarching themes (i.e., allegations of illegality) with you in the hope you can prepare your company for the inevitable wage and hour lawsuit letter that will eventually come to your mailbox sometime soon.

Keep in mind, depending upon your state laws, many such allegations possess either a three or four-year statute of limitations. That means your timekeeping, payroll, and wage and hour records from 2020/2021 are fair game.

I'm not kidding...

- Failure to Pay Overtime Wages
- Failure to Provide "Duty-Free" Meal Periods
- Failure to Provide "Duty-Free" State-mandated Rest Periods
- Failure to Maintain Wage and Hour Records and Accurate Wage Statements



- Failure to Pay Final Wages to the Employee in Accordance with State Regulations
- Failure to Reimburse Business Expenses
- Failure to Pay for Expenses Related to Maintaining the Employees' Company Uniform
- Unfair Competition
 - -Failure to Pay for Off-the-Clock Work
 -Failure to Pay Minimum Wages Due to Payroll Rounding Errors
 -Unauthorized Deductions from the Employee's Paycheck

To make matters worse, while those employee allegations are time-consuming, problematic, and bureaucratic, the terminated employee's lawyer informed the company he will attempt to extend this list of offenses, into a Class Action lawsuit, meaning he will try to enlist other former/ current company employees to become his clients and see if similar mistakes were made by the company to their detriment.

While the business owner will be in throes of this legal, record-keeping, and organizational culture maelstrom for many months, the rest of us must look forward. Your first step is to verify your company has adequate EPLI coverage with the Wage and Hour Add-on. Next, reacquaint yourselves, managers, and accounting staff with all relevant local, state, and federal wage and hour laws and how they manifest themselves during the workday (e.g., falsely assuming employees can take their "unpaid" meal period while driving in a company vehicle from one job site to the next, having inferior daily timekeeping practices lacking sufficient review, and "asking" employees to do work before or after their work shift, including calling them on the phone or texting them at night), train them accordingly, and hold them accountable for compliance. Also, institute monthly payroll, wage and hour, and benefits audits to verify accurate record keeping.

Certainly, no system is fool proof in today's litigious employment. However, the abovementioned recommendations will hopefully improve your company's legal compliance and its ability to minimize potential damage from a related lawsuit.

By the way, have you seen that letter in your company mailbox today?

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Water Efficient Landscape Dual Certification Program

December 6, 13, and 20 in Oceanside



This free, one-of-a-kind certification and educational opportunity is brought to you by CLCA and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The workshop series will be hosted in Oceanside on December 6, 13, and 20.

This joint effort combines the CLCA Water Management Certification Program with the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper program to offer the landscape industry an opportunity to obtain two nationally recognized EPA WaterSense Professional Certifications with one course and one written test.

Presented in three six-hour classes, these workshops will offer CEUs for your current certifications and provide you with a participation certificate.

They are free and available only to those in select counties of Southern California within the Metropolitan Water District's service area.

The combined curriculum focuses on landscaping fundamentals in one convenient course and includes topics like:

- Where Our Water Comes From
- Sustainable Landscaping
- Landscape Water
- Soils
- Irrigation Systems
- Irrigation Maintenance & Trouble Shooting
- Irrigation System Auditing
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- Irrigation Controllers
- Landscape Water Management
- Landscape Water Budgeting

Register online at https://clca.org/ certification-center/water-efficiencylandscape-dual-certification-program/

Connect, Learn, & Grow with CLCA! Not a Member? Join at clca.org/join

San Diego Chapter Member Milestones

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

24 Year Member Aztec Landscaping

23 Year Member Rudgers Landscape C & M

> **17 Year Member** Landscapes West

16 Year Member Eyescapes

13 Year Member Shasta Landscaping

12 Year Member Coastal Pacific Landscape Mgmt

10 Year Member A+ Landscapes Company

> **6 Year Member** Jain Irrigation

4 Year Member Rainbow Treecare Scientific Adv.

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- Become involved at the state and local levels.
- Access resources to operate more efficiently.
- Keep up on the newest skills & trends in the industry.
- Grow your business and distinguish your company and employees as top professionals in the industry.

A Fresh Take On Flow Sensors

By Richard Restuccia, Water Management Specialist, JAIN



Flow sensors have become integral in revolutionizing water management. These pivotal components stand out due to their ability to detect flow, a key feature of modern intelligent controllers. But what does "sensing flow" mean, and why is it paramount in efficient water management?

The Power of Sensing Flow

Flow sensors are cost-effective tools, crucial in detecting and halting irrigation systems when anomalies such as system malfunctions, breaks, or vandalism occur. They're designed to recognize and remember the standard flow rate of a system. Typically, manufacturers suggest running two complete irrigation cycles to capture this "normal" flow rate. Post this, operators can set the system to deactivate the main valve if the flow exceeds or drops below a predetermined percentage of this regular rate. When detecting such discrepancies, most systems are programmed to halt for a specified period temporarily.

Imagine a scenario: a disruption is identified in an irrigation zone two

minutes into its operational cycle scheduled for 15 minutes. After the initial trouble and a ten-minute pause, the system reactivates. If the same issue arises, it will pause again. By the time it restarts, the irrigation for that zone would have completed its cycle, allowing subsequent zones to activate. This intelligent mechanism ensures optimal water usage and substantial cost savings.

The Flow Sensor Dilemma

Despite their evident benefits, flow sensors are only installed on some systems. Their applicability is selective. For instance, if an irrigation system shares its water source with the interior of a building, using a flow sensor can become tricky due to unpredictable water usage within the building. Before integrating a flow sensor into a system, it's always advisable to consult with irrigation specialists.

Another challenge faced in widespread flow sensor adoption has been the direct wiring requirement to the controller. Retrofitting existing setups often necessitates burrowing through hard surfaces, making the implementation financially unsound, given the excavation and subsequent restoration expenses.

The Rise of Wireless Flow Sensors

Here's the silver lining: wireless flow sensors. Over the past few years, wireless alternatives to traditional flow sensors have emerged, though their pricing often deterred potential users. Recent advancements. however. offer solutions that utilize existing field wires, reducing the need for extensive trenching. These sophisticated systems pair field transceivers with flow sensors and advanced smart irrigation controllers, enabling the monitoring of multiple flow functions, master valves, and detailed flow rates. Moreover, using digital devices, users can swiftly tackle excessive flow rates, deactivate malfunctioning sprinkler heads, and remotely adjust specific flow settings. While these systems come with an upfront cost, they often prove more economical in the long run, especially when compared to the costs associated with the extensive trenching of wired systems.

Several wireless flow sensor options have surfaced in the market. As enthusiasts of water conservation, we're in a prime position to leverage this technology. With water costs escalating and technology becoming increasingly affordable, prioritizing water savings is an opportune moment. Adopting such innovations is a forward-thinking step towards sustainable water management.

Jain Unity Software offers flow sensing at no additional charge. This is our way of helping people make smart choices at no extra cost.



New Low-Voltage Dimmer Offers Precise Intensity Control

Now contractors can add precise dimming control to any project with the touch of a button! Unlike traditional, dial-based dimmers, the new Low-Voltage Dimmer from FX Luminaire features a simple, push-button design that makes it easy to set the desired intensity for any low-voltage fixture.

Intuitive Control for Every Application

Compatible with all low-voltage transformers, the new dimmer is a cost-effective, add-on accessory for any landscape lighting system, handling loads up to 120 W.

Its fully potted design enables easy installation in standard junction boxes or in the field — no electrician required. It also offers these additional benefits:

- Easy-to-read LCD clearly displays current fixture intensity
- Four backlit buttons enable easy intensity adjustments
- Dimming capabilities from 0% to 100% allow precise lighting control
- Modern design blends into landscapes for a pleasing aesthetic



"The Low-Voltage Dimmer provides contractors with a low-cost, standalone dimming option that's simple to install in multiple ways — in a standard single-, double-, or triple-gang junction box or directly in a valve box," commented James Cervantes, Senior Product Manager. "Either way, it's an easy add-on for any lighting job."

The Low-Voltage Dimmer is available now. Learn more at www.fxl.com



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