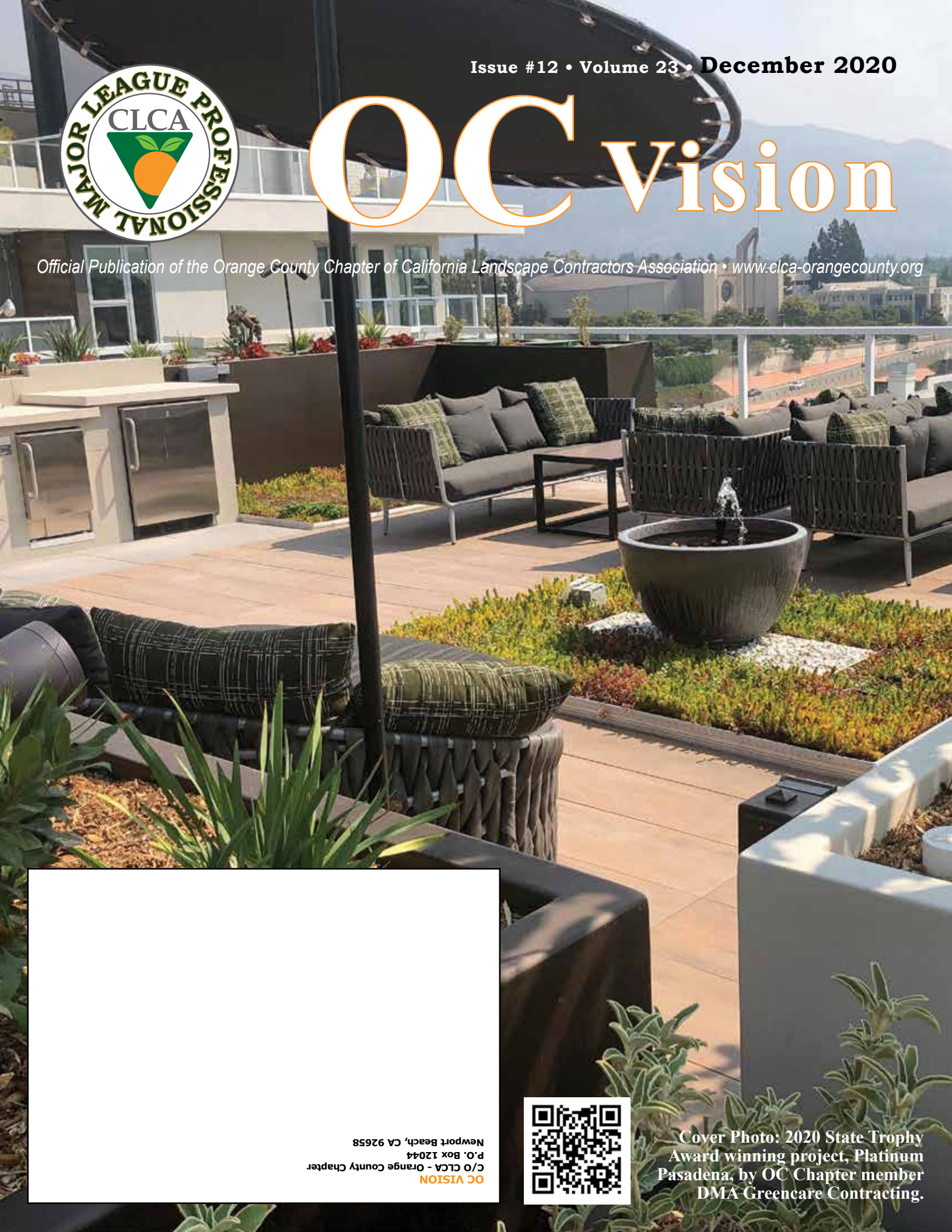


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# OC Vision

Official Publication of the Orange County Chapter of California Landscape Contractors Association • [www.clca-orangecounty.org](http://www.clca-orangecounty.org)



OC VISION  
C/O CLCA - Orange County Chapter  
P.O. Box 12044  
Newport Beach, CA 92658



Cover Photo: 2020 State Trophy Award winning project, Platinum Pasadena, by OC Chapter member DMA Greencare Contracting.



**Edward Wallace**  
**Midwest Landscaping**  
**Chapter President**

## Passing the Baton / Passing the Torch

In track and field events, there is one type of event that relies on the runners on that team to fulfill their job and not let the rest of the team down. That event is relay running. Whether it is the 440-yard, 880-yard, or mile relay, the proper passing of the runners' baton to the next runner is the most important task that must be performed well.

flame of hope, inspiration, and commitment to our industry and contractor association to others.

By keeping the torch lit and passing it on successfully to another to carry, that torch can continue to light the way for others who desire to compete. It can honor those who have lit the way before us. In passing the torch, we are doing our best to make our world a better place for all those we touch with our skills, love, and respect for our fellow man and for our environment.

Timing and coordination are key factors in the successful hand-off of the baton. Not dropping the baton is one of the most important responsibilities the runner will have. To have everyone in sync and doing their best during their leg of the run brings success to the team.

Thank you to our OC chapter members and OC chapter board for supporting me and being there to provide opportunities for all in our green industry. And thank you for helping me be able to successfully pass on the baton and torch of our chapter to our new chapter leaders.

Our OC chapter is ready to pass on the baton to a new team leader and team runners. Our chapter board for 2021 is solid and ready to get the race underway. They will provide our chapter with the best information, educational opportunities, and CLCA chapter support to help all our chapter members achieve their personal and business goals.

Merry Christmas, and happy holidays to you all! I for one am looking forward to a great new year ahead with our new team leaders and runners who will be ready when their time comes to successfully pass the baton on to fellow chapter runners and pass the torch on to keep the trail blazed and the future bright.

Passing on the torch is a very honorable thing to do also. It involves pride, commitment, and respect for those who have come before and after you. It shows the desire to pass on the

As always, I'll see you on the trails of life.  
Respectfully, Edward L. Wallace, Your Ole OC Chapter Pres.


**CLCA's mission is to serve and protect the interests of its members, promote professionalism, and advance public awareness of the landscape industry. Learn more at [www.clca.org](http://www.clca.org)**

Mrs. Smith just noticed puddling and wants new drainage... by the weekend. #HorizonStrong

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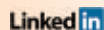
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## CLCA Teams with MWD of Southern California to Offer Water Efficient Landscape Dual Certification Program

CLCA and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California now offer a one-of-a-kind certification and educational opportunity for landscape professionals in Southern California.

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 virtually in six three-hour classes, these workshops will offer CEUs for your current certifications and provide you with a participation certificate. These workshops are free and available only to those in select counties of Southern California within the Metropolitan Water District's service area. The next available session is: January 28 and February 2, 4, 9, 11, and 16, 2021; 9:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.

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, Irrigation Scheduling, Irrigation

Controllers, Landscape Water Management, and Landscape Water Budgeting.

Thanks to a special grant from MWD, this exclusive course (a \$450 value) is FREE. A \$50 deposit is required to secure each applicant's seat.

A deposit refund is available once an applicant meets four requirements:

- Attends at least 89 percent of the four classes (missing no more than two of the 18 instructional hours).
- Take the 120-question multiple choice written test.
- Participate in the group hands-on irrigation audit conducted in person in Southern California.
- Enroll a landscape site to manage in CLCA's online water budgeting software.

*If an applicant does not meet all requirements, the deposit is non-refundable. Applicants must submit a registration cancellation in writing to CLCA no less than 10 days before the first class or deposit is non-refundable.*

Written exam retakes will be available at a rate of \$25 per attempt (non-refundable) for applicants that did not pass the initial written exam with a minimum score of 70 percent.



Learn more at <https://www.clca.org/certification-center/water-efficiency-landscape-dual-certification-program/>

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## Your PPP Loan + Business Deductions = IRS Issues

**D**id your company receive a Paycheck Protection Program loan? Did you apply for, or receive, loan forgiveness? When you prepare your 2020 tax return, do you plan on claiming a deduction for business expenses funded by the PPP loan?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, CLCA encourages you to hold tight while a recent IRS ruling is clarified.

CLCA’s accountants – Gilbert CPAs – and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants believe that the IRS’s interpretation denying deductions of expenses forgiven under the PPP program is contrary to Congress’s intent.

In an exclusive guidance document prepared by Gilbert CPA for CLCA, two tax experts note that “the IRS has stated that expenses paid with proceeds of PPP loans cannot be deducted because the loans are forgiven without a recipient having taxable cancellation of debt income. Therefore, the proceeds are, in effect, tax-exempt income. Expenses allocable to tax-exempt income are non-deductible because deducting the expenses would result in a double tax benefit.

“The IRS’s position on the non-deductibility of expenses used for PPP loan forgiveness has been criticized by accounting organizations and some Congress members who have argued that the denial of the deduction for these expenses is inconsistent with legislative intent. Congress may pass new legislation directing the IRS to allow deductions for expenses paid with PPP loan proceeds,” Gilbert CPAs’ tax experts say.

CLCA continues to work with our accountant and other green industry and small business groups and professional associations to clarify the situation.

**With advocacy, action on upcoming events and a Company/HR information portal, CLCA is taking action to help you survive the coronavirus pandemic. Find the most up-to-date information at [www.clca.org/covid](http://www.clca.org/covid)**

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# Creative Budgeting to Scale Your Business

By Jonathan Goldhill, The Goldhill Group

*You can't afford 10x customer growth unless you find ways to scale the resulting operational expenses.*

**D**eath by success. It sounds a bit crazy, but it's entirely possible to kill your company because the demand for your product or service exceeds capacity. It's why I advise my clients that scaling up requires an operating system – like a roadmap with guardrails – for managing the company growth.



afford to ignore these areas or trust them to under-qualified personnel.

One of the most cost-efficient approaches you can take with day-to-day back-office tasks is to outsource them. You'll get results that would otherwise be taking a big bite out of your operational budget while still retaining operational control. And you want that money for something else.

The money you save should be spent doing the things you cannot scale.

## Understand and accept the consequences

Of course, you want to grow your business. Doesn't everyone? Careful what you wish for, I tell people. You just might get it. You own this business; will it be something you still want to run after this growth?

Entrepreneurs with startups tend to look at the early times and remember them as fun. The first few spurts of growth provide confidence to hire more people, and there's time to spend searching for people who share your aspirations for the company. That's an incremental approach that won't work if you want to scale. You won't be able to afford it.

Hiring isn't the only process that won't be scalable. Going from 10 customers to 10,000 customers means you won't be able to pick up the phone and contact each one to ask what they think of the latest upgrade you've made.

These two examples show why the type of growth that comes from scaling must be systematized, codified, and standardized. Understand, too, that an unlimited budget wouldn't solve the problem – that would be falling back into the mode of incremental growth. Scaling up requires you to understand that automating and outsourcing business operations beyond your core competencies is the only way you can afford more customers.

## Budget for what does NOT scale

Efficient spending on high-impact operational areas is the best approach to budgeting for scale. Areas such as human resources, legal, and finance – these can't show you a direct and measurable return on investment. Even so, you can't

Often, customers sing a company's praises because of something their competitors are incapable of doing. It's your unique value proposition, and it's probably something that has to do with personalization or customization – something that may not easily be scaled up. If you want that unique value proposition to remain defensible, you'll have to budget for it. The money you save elsewhere is better spent here.

## Focus only on things that do scale

One of the exercises I ask my clients to undertake is to spend some time envisioning what 10x growth really might look like. Scaling business results in massive change. The pace quickens and specialized employees operate autonomously. All the while, you, as a leader, will find yourself distanced from daily operations. You can't be tangled in tactics; you're clearing the way with a focus on purpose.

To accomplish this, you'll have to understand and make peace with the difference between leadership and responsibility. A successful business owner knows that scale requires every member of the organization to act like an owner. Learning to delegate will save you money. Consider what your time is worth, then calculate the savings to your company if you spend less time on operational tasks and more on strategic thinking. True to the concept of creative budgeting and spending, you'll be doing more with less.

## Pay attention to what's working for you

You may have noticed that I haven't grabbed you by the hand and directed you to do five specific things that will wisely use a finite amount of business funding to move your company into a growth mode leading to scale.

If you take a bootstrap mentality about scaling, you'll be critical of outgoing expenses. You'll already be ahead of the game because the foundational thinking behind scale is that it's the achievement of massive customer growth without incurring similar operational expenses. But let's be realistic: Even growth at scale will require some level of funding. What's likely not true is that you'll have to double your operating costs if you want to double your revenue.

Are you struggling with ways to generate profitable, drama-free growth? Find out how you can remove the complexity. Call me at (818) 716-8826.

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## Landscaping Businesses Can Now Invest in Google's Local Service Ads

Online lead generation for landscaping businesses has reached a new peak. For those planning next season's marketing strategy, Google has added landscape service categories to its Local Service Ads program!

Local Service Ads (LSA) are triggered when a consumer searches for a local service on Google. These are the paid ads showing up to three companies at the top of Google's search results, even above standard Google Ads. One reason Google LSA ads are so desirable is that you only spend money when you get a lead. You don't pay for clicks like traditional Google Ads.

Certain studies have found that LSAs receive almost 14 percent of all clicks and should be considered a key strategy for landscaping companies looking to get higher conversion rates. It's a way to save you time and money while helping you avoid chasing after false leads.

Some of the new landscape service categories you can appear for include, but are not limited to:

- Landscape design
- Hardscapes
- Retaining walls
- Sod & seeding
- Walkway landscaping
- Outdoor water features
- Driveway or walkway paving

With new categories always being added, it's safe to say Local Service Ads is the next big thing in paid advertising for digital marketing. Right now, your landscaping business can get in on the ground floor!

### How to Start Running Local Service Ads

Your Local Services account will be created once you input your business category and company information. Any company that signs up for the program must go through a license check, insurance check, and background check to become a Google Guaranteed business.

Being Google Guaranteed is a requirement for any business running Local Service Ads. A green checkmark badge is displayed on your ad once you have passed all of Google's screening and qualification processes.

The entire process of becoming Google Guaranteed takes anywhere from 2-3 weeks on the low end, and up to 8-10 weeks on the high end. Once you are approved, you do not need to repeat this process unless you apply for another service category.

While your application is being processed, you'll receive access to the administrative portal where you can set up your profile by adding differentiators, photos, hours of operation, and more. You'll also choose the zip codes you want to target and the individual services for which you want to be shown.

### Cost and Payment for Landscaping Local Service Ads

LSAs operate under a cost-per-lead system, meaning you only pay for each valid lead that contacts you through the ad. The number of leads you receive in a week is based on what you're willing to spend on your ad. The average cost for the landscaping category is usually between \$30-\$40, but some LSAs can be as low as \$20 or as high as \$80.

You will set an average weekly budget that can be changed, even as often as week to week, so it consistently matches your business needs.

Some weeks you may find you'd like to spend more or less based on demand, but you'll never go over your monthly budget. Once it's exceeded, your business ad will not appear for the remainder of the month. This monthly budget will also adjust every time your weekly ad spend is updated.

Google has also introduced call bidding to their LSA program. Now instead of paying a flat rate, you let Google ads know what you are willing to pay per call.

### Junk Lead? Get Your Money Back!

False or spammy lead submissions cost you time and money and deter your attention away from engaging with consumers who are actively searching for your services. LSAs streamline your list of potential leads by only appearing to consumers searching for landscaping services you offer in your designated areas.

*Continued on Next Page...*



## Landscaping Businesses Can Now Invest in Google's Local Service Ads ... Continued from Previous Page

A consumer is considered a valid lead by Google and will be automatically charged based on one of these situations:

- Your company receives a text or email from the consumer
- The consumer leaves a voicemail
- You answer a lead's phone call and speak with them directly
- You either call, email, or leave a message for the consumer after a missed call (with no voicemail)
- Someone books your services through the ad

However, even if one of those criteria are met, it doesn't mean they were a potential customer or even looking for your services. Google will let you dispute any charges that you feel don't relate to your business or services. Here are some examples of invalid leads:

- The job requested is not a service your business offers
- A customer's location is not from an area you service
- Sales and solicitation calls or wrong numbers
- The lead was not human (e.g., bot or spam calls)
- You were charged for a duplicate lead
- You have no way of getting in contact with a customer (e.g., the person left a message but did not provide a valid phone number or email)
- The customer contacted the wrong business

When you truly have an invalid lead, Google almost always provides a refund after you file a dispute, which is only the click of a button on their phone app.

### Consumers Have Buying Confidence Using Google Guaranteed Providers

Above all, being Google Guaranteed can raise the trust and confidence consumers will have when deciding if they'd like to use your services. It also protects the customer from dealing with the aftermath from services that were less than adequate.

If a customer isn't completely satisfied with the quality of work provided, Google may, at their discretion, reimburse the customer up to \$2,000 that went toward the initial service. Google will first contact you if a request is submitted and allow you to work with the customer to try and resolve the issue.

Reimbursement is only available for customers who booked through your company's LSA and does not apply for damages to property, add-on or future projects, dissatisfaction with price or provider, or service cancellations.

### Local Service Ads Will Change the Landscaping Game

The green industry is in a pivotal moment of change with the addition of landscaping and other similar categories to the Local Service Ads program. A chance for landscaping companies to increase online lead generation is an opportunity for higher conversion rates and more business!

Don't miss out on this incredible digital marketing tool! Visit the Google Local Service Ads page for more information.

*This article, authored by CEO of Lawnline Mktg. Tony Ricketts, was excerpted from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' blog at [www.blog.landscapeprofessionals.org](http://www.blog.landscapeprofessionals.org).*

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1/2 Pg vertical	(3 5/8" x 9 1/2")
Full Pg	(8 1/2" x 11" + 1/4" bleed all around)

For more info. about advertising in the OC Vision, contact Bronwyn Miller at (949) 466-1222/eyescares@yahoo.com.

# Water Quality's Impact on Landscape Management

**W**ater is by far the most influential resource in landscape management. It is primarily used to hydrate the plants in the landscape, and it may be abundantly available or scarce depending on your climate and/or region. Water is the carrier of applied nutrients that support plant growth, delivering them to the rootzones of the plants. These nutrients are then delivered throughout the plants by this same water.

### Water Sources

Not all water is the same when it comes to irrigation suitability. Irrigation suitability is the capacity of the water to support a plant's needs while not hindering its ability to grow. We use different water sources to support our landscapes, the most common being potable (domestic) water, non-potable (reused or reclaimed) wastewater, and well water. Each of these sources add elements to the water such as salts and bicarbonates that damage water quality and threaten the health of your turf and plants.

Domestic water sources are often (but not always) adequate, but well water and reclaimed wastewater are not. These sources contain an abundance of these minerals and negatively impact plant growth and soil structure. The longer these liabilities go uncorrected, the more they accumulate in your soils. It is just a matter of time before the chemical structure of your soil mimics that of the water.

### Hard Water

Poor water quality can also affect everyday practices such as spraying pesticides by impacting the chemical's efficacy. Hard water antagonism is a condition where minerals in the water bond with the pesticide during the tank mix and prevent

it from going into the solution. As a result, the pesticide cannot effectively enter and move through the plant. These common minerals (salt, calcium, magnesium, bicarbonate) are all associated with and contribute to elevated pH and water hardness.

A systemic herbicide needs to absorb into the weed to kill it. But when bonded with minerals in the water, the newly bonded molecule is now too large to be absorbed by the plant. The weed's growth may be stunted, however chemical 'resistance' begins to develop. If left unchecked, 'resistance' evolves into 'tolerance,' rendering the herbicide chemistry completely ineffective. Hard water can also start to degrade the chemical as soon as the pesticide and the water are mixed – thus drastically reducing the efficacy of the spray solution.

If your herbicides are not working as well as they used to – or as well as you feel they should be – chances are it's your water that's working against you. Fortunately, hard water is easily corrected by adding ammonium sulfate to your tank, such as TurfGro Water Conditioning Agent. This inexpensive additive will improve your herbicide's performance and reduce your overall cost.

It is important to KNOW YOUR WATER so that you can treat it before it has a chance to sabotage your efforts. The only way to know it is to test it with a water test strip like Hach's AquaCheck 7. Use them and you will easily recognize issues in your water and be able to take the necessary steps to correct it.

*This article was excerpted from Horizon's blog at [www.horizononline.com/blog/](http://www.horizononline.com/blog/)*




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# Human Resources File System Guidelines

By Steve Cesare Ph.D., The Harvest Group

A landscaper from Michigan called me the other day to talk about being overwhelmed with all of the paperwork generated by Human Resources, and how the company can get more organized and efficient. I naturally concurred with the problem, process, and desired outcome that if the company does not manage the paperwork, it will soon be buried by it. I suggested the standard three-step system for managing Human Resources files.

**Personnel File.** Every employee must have a personnel file designed to contain job-related information capable of being reviewed by managers, supervisors, and authorized staff. Examples of documents that should be included in this file are as follows: job application; job description; selection test or interview results; acknowledgment forms (e.g., Employee Handbook, Confidentiality, Arbitration Agreement); driver's license with photograph; official DMV driving record and proof of auto insurance; Uniform Reimbursement Acknowledgment; Issuance Forms (e.g., cell phone, vehicle, equipment, computer); training records; performance evaluations; awards and honors (e.g., letters of commendation or recommendation); letters of reprimand or other disciplinary correspondence; Payroll Status Change Forms (e.g., change in salary, tenure, deductions, job title, promotion); Personnel Information Change Form; time off requests; Termination Form; and Severance Agreements.

**Confidential File.** Every employee must also have a separate confidential file that stores all personal information that could conceivably serve as bias




against the employee. Examples of documents that should be included in this file are as follows: EEO information (e.g., Visa documentation); all information related to health (e.g., medical, dental, vision, LTD, life) insurance benefits; workers' compensation records (e.g., reporting forms, investigation notes, status/release forms); 401(k) payments, loans, and hardship statements; W-4 Form; wage collections, garnishments, and any additional payroll deductions; physical examination results; drug testing results; FMLA documentation; disability leave information (e.g., short-term, long-term, permanent); sick leave documentation; emergency contact information; background check information; Direct Deposit authorization; investigative files for harassment or discrimination claims; grievance process documentation; unemployment insurance documentation; and reference check information.

**I-9 Forms.** Though not required by federal law, it is strongly recommended that all I-9 Forms be kept away from either the employee's Personnel File or his/her Confidential File, in separate three-ring binders, one for active employees and another for inactive employees.

To preserve file integrity and minimize the potential for bias, discrimination, or grievance, it is strongly recommended that the Personnel Files and Confidential Files for each employee be stored in separate file cabinets, or separate file drawers; never with both files for the same employee kept back-to-back in the same file drawer.

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


*This article was excerpted from the Harvest Group blog, Tuesdays with Steve Cesare.*



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