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It's been a busy couple of months as always at this time of year as the trade show season kicks in. As I write, SALTEX 2023 is closing its doors for another year. The annual Birmingham event aimed at those working in grounds care and sports turf maintenance, attracted visitors from across the globe, gathering to catch up with dealers, suppliers and manufacturers to network and seal the odd good deal!

It followed the eagerly anticipated GroundsFest event which launched for the first time in September at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire. It was a brave move by the GroundsFest team to introduce yet another event onto the scene, but despite mumbblings from some of "not another trade show", it appears to have got off to a great start. GroundsFest offered something a little different to SALTEX, and the January BTME event for the golfing industry, with its outdoor arenas, but speaking with both visitors and exhibitors at the events, the consensus is that there is room for all. After all a little competition doesn't hurt.

What is most important about these trade events are the opportunities they create to chat about what is going on in the industry from latest legislations, recruitment, training and the ongoing concerns of climate change. Of the latter, there is a drive with regulations and legislations to become more sustainable and biodiverse as an industry, but do we really understand what that

means or what needs to be done to achieve these goals?

In this issue Greg Rhodes delves deeper into the subject of sustainability asking those working within the industry for their take. And I took time out to join delegates at Swedish manufacturer Husqvarna's annual Living City conference, where speakers shared ideas of green space management is crucial to overcoming the challenges of city heatwaves, flooding and the threat of invasive species within our built up landscapes as urban areas continue to sprawl.

And finally, the leaves have fallen and storms are spreading debris across our open spaces. Our round up of leaf blowers and clearance machines offer some great solutions for a quick clean up operation.

Maggie Walsh, Editor
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Growing media supplier to be a finalist and sponsor at SGD awards

Boughton, a UK supplier of topsoil, growing media, specialist loam blends and landscaping products will be attending the Society of Garden Designers (SGD) on February 2nd, 2024 as both sponsors and finalists.

The company is up for the Sustainable Product of the Year at the 2024 awards. Open to affiliated business partners only, the award looks to celebrate “known or innovative products manufactured with renewable or largely recycled or reused materials, which minimise or reverse detrimental environmental impact during production and consider the product’s entire life cycle including how it is recycled and/or repurposed at the end of its life.”

It is Boughton’s BLS Plus Topsoil which has been submitted. Repurposed, single-source, screened and 100% natural and usually of a medium clay loam classification, BLS Plus enjoys added natural, organic, vegetative digestate bi-product to create a premium topsoil. Rich in organic matter content and benefitting from excellent moisture and nutrient retention capabilities, BLS Plus is best suited to large scale, ground level, planting projects.

Simon Hedley, Managing Director at Boughton says: “We thank the SGD for considering our entry and wait with bated breath to see who crowned winner of ‘Sustainable Product of the Year’ in February is next year.”

Boughton are also proudly sponsoring the awards too. Having previously sponsored the ‘Fresh Designer



NDSBLS Topsoil in use on a garden border

Landscapes & Gardens’ category at the 2022 edition of the SGD awards, the Boughton team return once again to show its support with the sponsorship of the UK Commercial or Community Landscapes & Gardens award.

Open to FSGD, MSGD, Registered Practice and Pre-Registered, this award will celebrate communally used public, semi-public, or commercial projects of any size with an emphasis on sustainability.

Simon Hedley added: “The UK Commercial or Community Landscapes & Gardens award is one that is set to be fiercely contested, with many worthy winners shortlisted. Best of luck to you all and we look forward to seeing who walks away with the trophy.”

GreenMech appoints Direct Sales Manager

A familiar face in the groundcare and arboricultural industries has recently joined GreenMech as their new Direct Sales Manager. Bringing more than 30 years of industry experience, Neal Hussey will be working with customers and aftermarket dealers across the Midlands, while his East-Anglian roots will also see him supporting dealer Thurlow Nunn Standen (TNS) in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.



Neal boasts a well-rounded sales and technical background, starting his career in the groundcare industry as an apprentice technician in 1982. He progressed to service manager before moving into sales roles from the turn of the millennium – working for Ben Burgess & Co for 19 years and playing an instrumental role in building and establishing their dedicated Arb department. After a short period working for Fuelwood selling a range of arb and forestry products, his most recent sales position was at Tallis Amos Group (TAG).

Martin Lucas, GreenMech Sales Director says of the appointment: “Neil’s strong foundation of knowledge and industry experience will no doubt help him succeed in this new role within the company”.

Says Neil of his new role: “With such a strong portfolio of British-designed and built woodchippers, including the popular EVO series, it feels like a very exciting time to be coming on-board. I look forward to getting to know the range and customers old and new over the coming months.”

Landscape awards to celebrate Student of the Year

The annual National Landscape Awards is fast approaching. Taking place on 1st December, 2023 in London, the event – run by the British Association Landscape Industries (BALI) – is set to acknowledge excellence across the landscaping industry from design and construction to maintenance and suppliers services.

As well as recognising the talents of those working across the industry, the event also celebrates those taking their first steps into landscaping. The Student of the Year will be crowned at the awards by the Bali Chalk Fund (BCF). The BCF works to establish and develop an effective enrichment programme designed to ensure that graduates enter the workforce with the necessary skill.

The BCF Trustees are very pleased to announce that they had record entries this year in two categories – landscape student of the year and design student of the year.

The Judges have selected the best seven students studying a Level 2 or above. The winner of each category “Landscape” and “Design” will be announced on the night. The nominees as follows:

Colleges	Students	Category
Active learning		
Merritt Wood College	Joe Elsdon	Landscape
Capel Manor College	Lucy Mitchell	Design
KLC School of Design	Catharine Beck	Design
London College of Garden Design	Craig Atkinson	Design
Sparsholt College	Adam Goodchild	Landscape
SRUC Oatridge	Duncan Frazer	Landscape
Wiltshire College	Russell Fletcher	Landscape

Each Best student has received a £100 prize and certificate. The winner of each category on the night will get a £500 prize each for the student and the college.

Trustees of BCF Nick Coslett and Paul Cowell say: “We have been delighted with the level of interest and record entries into this year’s competition. We are extremely grateful to the Students, Tutors and Colleges for taking part”



Green-tech strengthens management team

Martin Rourke has joined Green-tech as its Warehouse and Operations Director with responsibility for the joint management and ownership of the warehouse and yard and operations and logistics department, to ensure the company’s vast warehousing and distribution facilities run efficiently.



Kris Nellist (left) welcomes Martin Rourke

Says Martin: “Both departments are intrinsically linked, and a key objective of my role is to ensure closer links between the two to drive efficiencies across the business. As part of the senior management team, I will work closely with the Managing Director, Buying and Product Development Director and Sales Director; meeting regularly to ensure the goals of the organisation can be met with the efficient management of the flow of goods in and out of the business. I will also assume overall responsibility for all health and safety and facilities management aspects of the business.”

Managing Director Kris Nellist adds: “Martin has a wealth of experience and knowledge having worked as a senior logistics professional for over two decades. He has overseen many large projects, such as the design and build of new distribution centres for Budweiser. He has experience working across Europe with supply chain partners and broader business colleagues which will prove very beneficial for us. I am delighted that Martin has joined the Green-tech team and wish him all the best in this new role.”

Green-tech have other opportunities for those looking to build a career within the landscaping industry. Visit www.green-tech.co.uk and click on the careers page to find out more.

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GroundsFest arrives in style

The launch of the inaugural GroundsFest 2023 in September at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire has proven to be a success amongst the groundscape community.

Uniting professionals from across the industry the event brought together some 6,511 unique visitors plus exhibitors across the two days.



Although there has been some concern of an overload of trade shows on the landscaping calendar, the mix of indoor halls and outdoor areas certainly seemed to strike a chord with visitors at this event. Inside, attendees were offered a mix of exhibitors showcasing a wide range of products and services, while five seminar theatres offered a feast of free education. The Landscape Zone, an entire hall dedicated to those involved in the planning, design, and construction of outdoor environments in the landscaping sector, also proved to be a hit.

The practical demonstrations from Grounds Training were welcomed by attendees. During the two days large groups gathered round experienced instructors to learn more about pedestrian mowers, ride-on mowers, handheld machinery and the calibration

and use of knapsack sprayers and boom sprayers. Furthermore, the instructors were on hand in a large outdoor area to show visitors how to mark out a running track and speak about the essential elements of line marking sport pitches.

Outside exhibitors showcased their latest products with many new innovations being unveiled for the first ever time ahead of the 2024 season. There were also opportunities to participate in live demonstrations.

Those visitors who stayed on into the evening were greeted with an evening of entertainment, with music by a Queen tribute band, as well as street food and drinks on tap to keep the festival spirit going.

Commenting on the first ever GroundsFest, Event Director Christopher Bassett, said: "On behalf of all of us at GroundsFest we really want to extend our gratitude to all our exhibitors, partners and visitors that have showed their support for the first event.

"From the very start we wanted GroundsFest to be an event for everyone and to be able to establish a real sense of community. Over the two days we had sunshine, we had rain, but more importantly we had collaboration, built relationships, witnessed innovation at its finest and ultimately came together to celebrate the industry and have a great time with one another.

"The positive feedback has been overwhelming but we're certainly not resting on our laurels. We're already planning how we can improve the event for 2024 by listening to every single piece of feedback and by analysing both the exhibitor and visitor surveys. We'll certainly be back with GroundsFest chapter two in September 2024 and we cannot wait to welcome you all again."

Growers of the Year

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) announced the winners of the 2023 Grower of the Year Awards at the HTA's annual conference, *Horticulture, The Conference*, which took place in Birmingham in October.

A total of nine awards were presented across five categories, including overall winners and highly commended. Allensmore Nurseries was named Best Finished Plants Grower, Greenwood Plants won the Peat Free Grower award, while Majestic Trees won Inspirational Business. Several individual industry professionals were also recognised, with Kyle Ross of Wyevale Nurseries winning Young Grower under 35 and Maria Bengtsson from Majestic Trees winning Best Staff Member.

Says Martin Simmons, Horticulture Support Manager at the HTA: "We were delighted by the response to this year's Grower of the Year Awards and the standard of entries was exceptionally high. Our thanks to the judges, Alan Down, Tim Briercliffe, Martin Cowell and Phil Clayton, who found it quite challenging to separate

out the winners, with only one or two points in each category setting them apart.

The Grower of the Year Awards demonstrate the high calibre of UK nurseries who lead the way in quality, levels of service, innovation and peat-free production and it is fantastic to be able to recognise young and upcoming talent that will ensure our world-class industry can thrive in the future."





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


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SoilsCon returns in 2024

Following a four-year break, during which time the world has experienced pandemic, dramatic changes to its climate patterns and major advances in science and technology, SoilsCon – the landscape industry's 'go to' conference for soil-related topics – is returning.

The one-day conference will take place on Wednesday, 28th February 2024, at the elegant Phyllis Court in Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Organised by soil scientist and landscape consultant Tim O'Hare, it promises landscape architects and specifiers, housebuilders, landscape contractors and designers, developers, topsoil manufacturers, local government officers, and professionals from the wider industry, a day of invaluable professional development, discussion and debate, with presentations by some of the leading experts in their respective fields.



Henley's Phyllis Court, venue for SoilsCon 2024

To date, the SoilsCon 2024 speaker line-up features: Tim O'Hare, Principal Consultant, Tim O'Hare Associates; Tim White, Senior Associate, Tim O'Hare Associates; Dr Iain Gould, Associate Professor in Soil Science, University of Lincoln; Helen Elks-Smith, Principal, Elk-Smith Landscape & Garden Design; Jennifer Mui, Director, MRG Studio; Katherine Iles (Principal Engineer) and Ryan Coghlan (Senior Landscape Architect), ARUP

Subjects will include:

- *Soil health and functions in landscapes – a practical approach*
- *Soil requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain typologies*
- *Soil organic matter and carbon sequestration*
- *The challenges of garden construction*
- *Species-rich soils – a National Trust case study*
- *Biochar and Dolerite – the science behind these soil conditioners*

A Soil Surgery will be held during the day's networking periods with members of the Tim O'Hare Associates team on hand to help delegates with their specific soil issues.

To express interest in attending email sharon.frost@toha.co.uk or call 01491 822653.

Yorkshire design school celebrates first anniversary

The Yorkshire School of Garden Design recently celebrated its first anniversary with an exhibition showcasing the work of the first cohort of Diploma in Garden Design graduates.

"I can't believe it has been a year," says the school's founder Alistair Baldwin.

"We are so proud of what our students have achieved, and this next generation of landscape designers are truly something to behold."

The Yorkshire School of Garden Design launched in August 2022 to teach budding designers of the future how to work in the beautiful north of England terrain.

Since launching with its flagship professional Diploma in Garden Design, the School has delivered a year's course encompassing all aspects of landscape art, design and planting.

Tim Gray, who graduated with a distinction from the 2023 class, jumped at the opportunity of training at the school having decided to retrain and explore a career in garden design.

"I have always loved gardens and was fascinated about



2023 graduate Tim Gray

understanding the deeper meaning and methodology of their design. When I heard about the opportunity to learn from one of the best in the industry, in a face-to-face environment, I jumped at the chance.

"The Diploma in Garden Design is such a unique course, as it offers students the opportunity to learn the fundamental tools required for a career in garden design, as opposed to solely landscape architecture or gardening, from some of the brightest minds in the industry. I had no hesitation that this was the course for me and relished the challenges and hard work it demanded."

The Yorkshire School of Garden Design is now accepting applications for the 2024 Diploma in Garden Design and has released the details of its 2023-2024 inspirational short courses. The short courses give an individual the opportunity to explore the industry, with the guiding hand of some of the UK's most talented tutors and practitioners.

For further information on the Yorkshire School of Garden Design and all its courses visit www.ybfd.co.uk

GMA awards partners with the Motor Neurone Disease Association

The Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association will be the official charity partner of the Grounds Management Association's (GMA) Industry Awards 2023.

With the Industry Awards ceremony being hosted at Headingley Stadium this year, the GMA are keen to support a charity close to the hearts of many sporting figures, especially those whose careers have been spent at the stadium.

In 2019, it was announced that Leeds Rhinos legend Rob Burrow MBE had been diagnosed with motor neurone disease and since then himself and teammate Kevin Sinfield OBE have been campaigning for support, with Kevin taking on a range of challenges in order to raise funds for the MND Association.

Says Kevin Sinfield OBE, England Rugby Union coach and patron of the MND Association: "I'm very grateful that MND Association has been chosen as the charity partner for the GMA's Industry Awards at Headingley Stadium. For a long time now, MND Association has been hugely important to me not only as Patron but also in supporting close friends and many others who have faced a diagnosis.

"It's crucially important we all continue to bang the drum together to fight MND and take us closer to a cure for this cruel disease."

The event, which will be held at Headingley Stadium on Wednesday 29th November, will be hosted by award-winning sports broadcaster, Hayley McQueen, and will give grounds teams the opportunity to celebrate their vital role in making sport possible.



Avant Tecno builds new headquarters in Suffolk

The development of a new 32,200sq ft multimillion pound headquarters for Avant Tecno UK at Suffolk Business Park in Bury St Edmunds is under way.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in October to mark the start of works with representatives from Avant Tecno UK, builders SEH French and Churchmanor Estates, Robinson Arnold, Holmes Plant & Construction, LSI Architects, Conisbee, Richard Utting Associates and members of West Suffolk District Council.

Due for completion in August 2024, the site will be



home to the company's UK operations. The company says it will boast dedicated dealer training facilities, flexible collaborative workspaces, efficient and automated warehouse technology, and a technical workshop.

Raimo Ala-Korpi, Managing Director of Avant Tecno UK, says of the move from Thetford: "Avant has enjoyed a sustained period of growth in recent years and, as a consequence, we have outgrown our existing warehouse and office facilities. Our new purpose-built UK headquarters represents a significant investment and is a commitment to the future for our dealers and end user customers."

Avant Tecno UK provides multi-functional loaders for use in various areas including farming, landscaping and construction.

Neil Pryke, Contracts Manager for SEH French, adds: "The team is thrilled to be involved in this project to deliver Avant Tecno UK's new headquarters. Our appointment is testament to the quality of work we deliver, and we look forward to working with partners on this exciting development."

Matt Cloke, Development Director at Churchmanor Estates, comments: "Avant Tecno are the acknowledged market leader in their sector, and so we were delighted to be asked to work with them to bring to life their vision for a new bespoke UK HQ, warehouse and showroom.

Defra minister visits nursery to discuss peat-free growing media

Trudy Harrison MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Defra and Minister for natural environment and land use, recently visited Greenwood Plants at Arundel, Sussex to discuss its transition to peat-free growing.

Greenwood started its transition to becoming peat-free in early 2022 and currently grows 99% of its plants across all six of its nurseries using peat-free compost. Trials are underway in its propagation area to transition the last 1% of the young plants into peat-free growing media. Greenwood is expected to announce that it is growing 100% peat-free in coming weeks, well ahead of its end of 2023 target.

“It was a pleasure to visit Greenwood for a tour of its Fresh Acres site and see how it has embraced the challenge of transitioning to peat-free horticulture,” says Ms Harrison.

“Peatlands provide important habitats for our plants and wildlife and are large natural carbon stores, which is why we are phasing out the use of peat in the professional horticultural sector by 2030.”

Last week Greenwood was named 'Peat Free Grower of the year' at the Horticultural Trade Association (HTA)



Trudy Harrison inspects plants at Fresh Acres

awards 2023, acknowledging the company's commitment to becoming peat-free.

“We are proud to be leading our sector in the transition to peat-free. We believe this is an essential first step for the horticultural sector in contributing to the vision for Net Zero across the UK for current and future generations” said Melanie Asker, Managing Director.

Following the completion of their peat-free transition, Greenwood's focus will be on its supply chain, with many suppliers to Greenwood already committing to fulfilling their orders with plants grown in 100% peat-free media.

Land Studio launches Ecology division

Land Studio, a leading landscape architecture and engineering design studio creating nature-based solutions, has expanded and launched a new Ecology division.

It is being headed up by Director of Ecology Val Gateley who has more than 16 years of experience as an ecologist, including specialist knowledge in habitat survey and assessment.

The new service will offer clients a wide range of ecological services including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments in support of their projects.

Land Studio was established in Chester in 2016 and is based in The Old Rectory on St Mary's Hill in the city. The company works on projects across the UK and its clients include The National Trust.

Last year, it became the first nature led landscape architecture practice of its size in the UK to have its own in-house civil engineering and sustainable drainage design division.

“We're delighted to welcome Val to our growing team and to launch our Ecology design and management division,” says Simon Richards, Managing Director of Land Studio.



Val Gateley, Director of Ecology at Land Studio

“We look at all our projects from a holistic perspective that considers both the built and natural environments in equal measure, so we're excited to expand into providing ecology design.

“Our ecology expertise encompasses a wide range of services, including ecological surveys, biodiversity net gain assessments, habitat creation, enhancement and restoration and we can fully integrate them within our design process to meet the needs of our clients. This streamlined approach will create high quality integrate design solutions and save our clients time and money, removing the need to engage multiple consultants to address the requirements of a project.

Director of Ecology Val Gateley says: “It's great to join the Land Studio team and to be part of a forward-thinking business bringing landscape architecture, engineering and ecology all together in one practice.

“I'm passionate about biodiversity enhancement and working closely together as an in-house team on the design of projects from the initial stages makes absolute sense.”

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Landscaping sustained

Defining sustainability is a moving feast of factors often largely out of any individual's control. **Greg Rhodes** asked some industry players for their take

Sustainability is a sprawling subject for which its definition depends on one's perspective, it seems. It embraces every facet of living and is limited only by the scope of our thinking. But business places parameters on applying our worldviews, and we can join only some of the dots of what would be a virtuous circle.

Knowing where your dots end and another business's begin can help speed the creation of that circle however, hence the importance of 'sustainable' supply chains.

Lying within the sustainability sphere, biodiversity also looms large. National strategies to create habitats that will help humans live alongside other life are impacting positively to some degree but extinction data suggests we may be losing the global battle, for a number of reasons. Coming down to earth, suppliers and contractors can only shape their immediate landscape of interest and hope their actions play a part in fashioning true sustainability.

Grass is key | Lindum Turf

As reportedly the most successful species on the planet, grass forms a key element in the sustainability equation. An efficient carbon dioxide absorber and oxygen emitter, its thousands of cultivars create living leisure and sporting landscapes.



Laying the green carpet at the Olivier Awards, Lindum Turf

Those dedicated to growing turf stay rooted to its benefits over artificial alternatives.

Lindum Turf grows some 900+ acres near York, supplying eight turf varieties for varying sporting, leisure and amenity demands as well as for green roof systems.

"We're witnessing a big rise in turf sales across the board," reports contracts manager Roger Moore, "and not only for traditional applications."

"For the past two years we've laid a real grass red

carpet for the Olivier Awards in London using Wowgrass, transforming the entrance into a natural environment. After the event the green carpet was reused elsewhere, supporting our green, sustainable vision."

In 2010, the company laid 2,300 m of the same product in Trafalgar Square for the Greening Grey Britain initiative. "Afterwards, we rolled the turf back up and six hours later donated it to a soil stabilisation project on the Embankment, where it still remains.

May 2023 marked a milestone for the company when it won Sustainable Product of the Year at the Chelsea Flower Show for its plastic-free wildflower mat, which uses a mix of products that break down over time without causing harm to the environment, Roger explains.

"No fewer than 27 species of wildflower, perennials and herbs make up the self-sustaining mat – including ox eye daisies, pink and red campion, ladies cats ear and viper bugloss – which can be laid in virtually any setting," says Roger.

Time to adapt | George Davies Turf

"Sustainability's an easy buzzword," declares George Davies, managing director of Milton Keynes based George Davies Turf (GDT).

"Trying to attain it makes turf production far trickier. Given the array of chemicals banned, and rightly so, growers have to modify and adapt to the new normal."

With nearly a million rolls sold by GDT so far this year, all free of plastic netting, his concerns are justified, if only because reliability and quality of product is its lifeblood. "Leatherjackets are part of nature and their cycle cannot be ignored in the production of turf. When you factor in rapid climate change, hotter weather and the need to irrigate more to keep turf alive, as well as the more frequent storms you can understand the pressure growers are under."

All the turf at GDT, which is sourced plastic free from top growers, is lifted with an automatic harvester to palletise the product with recyclable plastic wrapping before transporting it to the depots.

"I'm conscious of turf miles," George says, "and as the rail network is just not there, we rely on road transport for collecting and delivering product.

"It's about reducing the weight of each roll to maximise the number we can load on to a lorry without any reduction in quality to deliver more turf per mile, which in turn impacts our carbon footprint."

Also, using growers within their tightly controlled catchment allows GDT to have deliveries in their yard within two hours to provide "the freshest turf on the market".



George Davies Turf delivers within a two hour radius

The 3,000+ landscapers and thousands of garden owners GDT supplies will be heartened to hear such exacting attention to the nitty gritty of the sustainability journey.

Electric isn't the future for HGVs however (it runs Seven currently, all Euro 6) George argues. "The Government is hell bent on electric but 10 HGVs on the fast charge network pull as much power as a small town.

Also, if you consider where and how lithium is mined then shipped around the world, no way can you say battery production is sustainable.

"JCB developed a hydrogen engine recently, and as an F1 fan, I believe in this technology more than electric and I would love to see hydrogen fuelled F1 soonest.

"Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was correct in drawing back from his net zero targets. It's about whether we can compete on the world stage by reducing emissions so quickly. Afterall, moving from Euro 5 to Euro 6 brought about a miniscule reduction in emissions and was a costly transition."

Operations manager Freddie Smith adds: "GDT is an early adopter of tech and is working with our diesel forklift truck manufacturer Manitou to develop an electric version strong enough to lift the 1.4 tonne pallets of turf but it's a hard nut to crack to create enough range coupled with power."

The topsoil GDT supplies is all BS3882 2015 standard, originating from Lincolnshire as a waste product of housebuilding.

"Recycling topsoil sounds feasible but can include nasties such as heavy metals so can be harder to achieve in practice – one reason we pull ours from trusted sources and is regularly tested."

A farming background and degree in agriculture helps give George the wish to share knowledge and information to help raise awareness among his customers of the need to encourage more sustainable environments. "I want to do all I can to minimise my impact on our planet and hopefully leave the earth in better place than I found it."

Fuelling sustainability | Aspen Fuel

Years before current heated debate over the UK's continued reliance on fossil fuels and the government's

green light to lift more oil from the North Sea, Sweden was busy developing petrol without many of the additives proven to risk health.

Aspen Fuel was developed in the late 1980s to protect forestry workers from potentially cancer-causing exhaust fumes emitted by traditionally produced petrol, explains Axel Hildebrand, Business Development Director for Anglo American Oil Company, the UK distributor.

"As an alkylate fuel, it is low in the harmful hydrocarbons such as benzene, toluene and xylene, which can cause ill health when exhaust fumes from traditional petrol are inhaled," he explains.

"The fuel is 99 per cent less harmful and brings 108 times the improvement in carcinogenic benzene emissions when used in 2-stroke machinery. Some countries now require hand-held tools to be powered with it. We've taken the best bits of petrol to create a fuel that's better for humans and machinery alike." Little surprise then that Axel reports a strong increase in sales, year on year for domestic and professional use.



An alkylate, Aspen Fuel is low in harmful hydrocarbons

But can this be said to be a sustainable solution, in light of so much pressure to switch to electric? "Everyone has a different definition of sustainability," he states. "If we're talking about a fuel that allows tools and machines to last longer because it is chemically inert, so reducing waste, then I see this solution working hand in hand with electrically powered kit.

"Also, operators do not need to change their process of working, as they do when changing to electric. Petrol tools are also easier to fix and are therefore kept in service for longer compared to battery tools which are more likely put in the bin and replaced than repaired. All part of the sustainability equation."

Raising awareness | Ego Power Tools

Meeting previous net zero targets was always a tough call, notes Emma Gayler, marketing manager for EGO Power Plus, which uses its own technology in the hand tools and turf care machinery it supplies.

Extensive independent research has equipped the company with some startling statistics about the level

of emissions landscapers have been exposed to over the years when using traditional petrol-powered tools.

Ego's current campaign "Challenge 2025" initiative is a bid to raise awareness of emission levels among various equipment, with an ultimate eye on persuading the sector to switch to battery power.



Ego Tools hope to empower dealers to repair tools instead of replacing them

"A petrol leaf blower requires more than half of the fuel needed by a family car to run for the same amount of time," Emma reveals, "so there's still a big impact on the environment. These tools aren't regulated in the same way as cars and are really inefficient. It's all about getting the facts out there so that purchasers can make a more informed choice when they replace kit."

Sustainability has to embrace the wider perspective if it is to mean something, she argues. "Looking at the issue holistically is vital – taking account of noise pollution for example, which can impact users' health."

With a focus on clean air zones, the 2025 campaign is now going to look into why local councils do not take the impact of outdoor power equipment on the environment as seriously as they do with vehicles, in some cases even banning them.

"We back the Green Public Procurement policy and welcome moves by Berlin to ban petrol leaf blowers," Emma says, "and by California to ban petrol mowers next year. Our aim is to constantly look at how we can be as sustainable as possible. For example, we empower local dealers to repair tools instead of just replacing them. In France, the reparability index is a legal requirement and our new PRO X range has been designed with servicing and reparability in mind."

In early 2024, EGO will be launching its new PRO X range of professional battery-powered outdoor power equipment. In preparation for this, the brand will be releasing a white paper - Battery Power, Performance and Public Spaces - "a thought-led document for those in the industry who want to find out more about the benefits of battery-powered tools, discover key – and shocking – industry stats and access information on important topics such as emissions and noise pollution; all in one place."

Electric future | Etesia

Turfcare machinery and hand tools distributor Etesia focuses on electrically powered kit made in France. Though independent, "we are bound by the products Pellenc supply," notes managing director Les Malin, "which are sustainable, technological solutions for green

and urban spaces. It was the first global manufacturer to introduce lithium-ion technology in power tools, finding a compromise between power, autonomy and weight to satisfy demand for intensive and professional work."

"Having launched our first battery machines in the late 1990s, we can claim to be at least 20 years along the sustainability road," says Les, "and have been including recycled black polymer in products since 2010, when we launched the M2E Donky wheelbarrow.

"We've always built machines with longevity in mind," he continues, "with some Hydro 100 ride-ons still in service since their introduction in 1985, before we brought out its electric equivalent in 2008/9."

Key customers such as The National Trust demand sustainable solutions for its estates and Etesia fits the bill, delivering battery hand tools with interchangeable boards and repair capacity to limit waste, Les explains.

"You have to consider the whole lifetime of a machine, not just digging out core elements such as lithium."

He too eyes the hydrogen fuel option as a longer term, even more sustainable solution, but for now, local councils are driving the agenda by specifying that contractors can use only 100% electrically driven vehicles within their boundaries.



Pellenc distributed by Etesia offer sustainable solutions for green and urban spaces

"But for residential work, power options very much depend on landscapers' financial status. It's a difficult one. Noise intrusion can prove a big factor. For sole operators, time is precious. Electric tools allow them to start work earlier.

"I heard of one example where a landscaper had cut a customer's hedge early on and then knocked on their door asking for payment. 'When you've done the work' was the reply!"

Two years ago, Etesia put in place a 10-year plan, assessing product and market developments and the company's stance within those. "One in every eight British households have no garden and new builds have ever smaller ones," Les notes. "It's a changing market and the national trend is to develop larger green spaces for people to walk to so we have to adapt accordingly."

Living City: A future that nurtures biodiversity in urban spaces

Husqvarna, Swedish manufacturer of robotic mowers and smart garden technology, recently invited delegates to their annual Living City conference to share ideas on maintaining a sustainable future within the grounds care and landscaping industry. **Maggie Walsh** reports

Climate issues are escalating across the globe. Our cities are growing at an alarming rate and at the same time battling the challenges of heatwaves, flooding and the threat of invasive species. Within two decades 40% of the world's protected areas will essentially be 'urban parks'. Green spaces are more crucial to human health and the biodiversity of species than ever before is the message from Husqvarna at the Living City event, which took place at the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris. Now is the time to take action to mitigate the effects the tools of our trade have on the landscape as we maintain our cities and open spaces.

One of the speakers at the event, Jonas Willaredt, Vice President of Sustainability Affairs at Husqvarna Forest & Garden reminded attendees at the conference of the 2015 Paris Agreement, and of the European law that states Europe is to be carbon neutral by 2050. Regulations, he says, are in place to achieve these targets (there are currently 4272 global environmental and sustainability regulations in place), and notes three trends emerging.

- **Electrification:** the use of batteries taking over from fuel. There will be an annual growth of 27% by 2030 in the use of battery power. There however needs to be further regulation on how to manage the end life of a battery.
- **Circulatory:** an economy whereby tools can be easily repaired, repurposed, reused or recycled, rather than thrown aside.
- **Biodiversity:** a drive to educate those unaware of the meaning and impact of biodiversity.

Quantifying urban green space

Husqvarna has been quantifying urban green space using satellites since 2019. Their Husqvarna Urban Green Space Index (HUGSI) is an AI-powered satellite solution that indicates how green cities are by reviewing their green areas and how they are developing. The aim is to contribute to the protection and growth as well as the maintenance of green areas in cities. Cities apply to be

part of HUGSI and all data is open and published at www.hugsi.green.

Now the manufactures have launched their HugsI.green Urban Biodiversity Alert. The new alert feature allows cities to pinpoint areas to protect and further develop to boost urban biodiversity. Cities can use the tool to identify vital connectors between these areas to allow for migration of species. The information and maps provided help those looking after urban areas to understand where new connectors can be formed and through this focus their efforts on greening where the highest biodiversity values can be achieved.

"Using Ai-analysis of satellite images we will be able to assess the biodiversity potential and connectivity in global cities on a macro level. It will all be available on our urban green space monitoring service called HUGSI.green in the end of November," explains Erik Swan, Director, Digital Business Exploration at Husqvarna.

This solution empowers cities to assess, track and boost their urban biodiversity.

Rich biodiverse ecosystems can exist in urban areas, says the team behind HUGSI.green. "By recognising and working actively to preserve and expand urban ecosystem services and biodiversity, cities get help boosting climate-change mitigation and adaptation.

"To understand biodiversity in cities you need to assess the quantity and quality of green space as well as the degree to which different areas are connected to each other."

As a rule of thumb larger green areas are better than smaller areas for biodiversity and areas with a quality of green space close to that of natural areas (predominantly native species and natural ecosystems) will harbour more species than human-altered. If there are less barriers between these spaces, there will be a larger interconnected living space for various species thereby increasing biodiversity.

"With the introduction of this new Biodiversity Alert feature to HUGSI.green we hope to bring vital data to municipalities committed to actively manage and grow their urban biodiversity," says Erik.



Collecting green data

Using AI Husqvarna has created a tool that can map green spaces across large areas.

Launching the Husqvarna Strix at the Paris event, the team unveiled their latest innovation to assist landscapers in assessing their surrounding environment while in addition taking care of labour heavy tasks. Strix is a fully automatic multi-purpose platform equipped with an array of tools and scanners that can collect green health data. Sensors on the robot can assess data on, under and above ground.

The above ground scanner will register plants, trees and animals and with AI can calculate the environmental conditions and promote actions on this. It can for instance detect a tree fungus or an invasive species at an early stage.

The ground sensor detects leaves and gravel on paths - its data can activate the Strix unit to carry out other tasks such as blowing leaves from a path. In other cases it can send out an alert that seeding and fertiliser tools are needed for areas in need.

The underground radar can gather data about humidity, roots and soil quality. It can detect for compaction and warn of areas with drainage problems.

By collecting this data and combining it with satellites a digital twin of the green spaces is created providing actionable data. It offers the chance to optimise green space management and safeguard bio-diversity.

Biodiversity advisory board

To reaffirm its dedication to biodiversity Husqvarna has also assembled a team of experts to form the Husqvarna International Biodiversity Advisory Board (HIBAB).

At COP 15 in 2022, global leaders committed to taking "urgent action" to "halt and reverse biodiversity loss" by the end of the decade, by protecting 30% of the planet and restoring 30% of ecosystems. In response, Husqvarna has established its advisory board of experts with the aim to foster knowledge exchange, educate workforces, and pinpoint opportunities that empower those, such as landscapers and grounds teams, to make informed decisions in the quest to preserve biodiversity.

Furthermore, the advisory board will play a pivotal role in validating some of the current and forthcoming solutions and services from Husqvarna.

Says Jonas Willaredt, Vice President of Sustainability Affairs at Husqvarna Forest & Garden: "Given our profound historical and future ties to forests, parks, gardens, and urban farming, we are resolute in our engagement to support safeguarding biodiversity. The Husqvarna International Biodiversity Advisory Board will serve as a compass guiding our future endeavors, and we are honored to have preeminent experts supporting us on this journey."

Product roundup from Husqvarna

Husqvarna showcases latest products and innovations for professionals to look out for in 2024

Professional battery range

Multi Rack Charger (40-C1000X4): Built to allow for swift hassle-free battery charging in the field and in the workshop. Offering the capability to simultaneously charge up to four Husqvarna Bli-X 36V batteries directly at the work site, this multi-rack charger ensures uninterrupted battery-powered operation wherever electricity is accessible. Its ergonomic and robust design facilitates the safe and organized transportation of batteries. Furthermore, the weather-proof design enables charging in all weather conditions, making it an invaluable asset for any landscaping or tree care team.

The charger also offers Active battery cooling during charging offers short charging time and extended battery lifetime and is compatible with existing and coming Husqvarna Bli-X 36V batteries.



Multi-rack charger

Battery pole hedge trimmers (525iHF3 and 525iHE4) Delivering performance equivalent to their petrol counterparts, these hedge trimmers offer impressive performance, backed by IPX4 certification for extended uptime. They offer optimized weight distribution for improved balance, achieved through rear motor placement. There is a three-speed mode to adjust the maximum knife speed to current working conditions and an intuitive user interface with battery status on handle.

Wireless robotic mower for small areas

HUSQVARNA Renown for its robotic technology the Swedish manufactures also launched latest addition to its robotic mower family. Available in 2024 the Automower® 520 EPOS is a wire-free robot mower delivers high productivity and a cost-effective solution to smaller commercial areas. As an added bonus, it can cut patterns.

Since the introduction of robotic mowers, customers have asked for the possibility of cutting patterns in the lawn. Now, using systematic cutting, the new **Automower® 520 EPOS** can mow in a series of pre-set designs that deliver a variety of patterns such as checkerboard, triangles, or diamond shapes. The patterns are made possible by the robotic mower's precision navigation and ability to quickly adjust the cutting height of its five-blade cutting discs. In addition, the new robotic mower's mowing capacity is 5,000 sqm in 48 hours.

As with all EPOS navigated robotic mowers from Husqvarna, this model uses of virtual boundaries and so allows aerating, scarifying and digging without worrying about in-ground wires. With EPOS, and the connected management system Husqvarna Fleet Services, the user has an ultra-flexible solution that facilitates scheduling and setting of cutting zones, which for instance enables stay-out zones during pollinating season. The Fleet Services application also allows the user to set mowing patterns as well as other hardware settings and software upgrades.

EPOS technology

Husqvarna's virtual boundary EPOS technology is a high-precision satellite navigation system that delivers an accuracy of 2-3 centimetres, giving the user a new level of flexibility and robustness to the installation. The current range of professional robotic mowers using EPOS



technology includes four models of robotic mowers, managing up to 75,000 sqm.

Husqvarna Automower 520 EPOS will be available in 2024 at RRP £3,799. The Reference station is sold separately at RRP £899.

A leg up for arborists

A breakthrough for tree professionals is the Husqvarna **Power Ascender**. This revolutionary battery lift will transform the way arborists get to work up in the trees. The new product made possible through a strategic partnership with Skylotec, a pioneer in innovative climbing solutions for professionals.

It allows arborists to effortlessly ascend into the treetops, streamlining the process and allowing them to get to work fast. With its unique compact size and capacity, arborists can now reach their work areas with ease and without delay.

Says Director of Product Management Chainsaws at Husqvarna, Johan Hallendorff: “We are thrilled to introduce the Husqvarna Power Ascender - a game-changing lift that will revolutionize how arborists approach their work and to an attractive price point. Its innovative design and seamless operation will significantly enhance efficiency in canopy projects”.

The new battery lift uses Husqvarna’s powerful and proven BLi-X battery system which means users can use the same Husqvarna battery system with other existing products from Husqvarna.

Husqvarna Power Ascender will be available at selected partners for purchase early 2024.



Blown away

A look at the latest leaf blowers and ground clearance machines, tailored for a quick clean up of fallen leaves ahead of the winter season

STIHL BGA 300: With a maximum blowing force of 26 newtons, this cordless backpack blower – the most powerful in the STIHL cordless range – features a high air speed to ensure even wet, heavy autumn leaves can be cleared quickly and efficiently. It is powered using STIHL's professional AP System AR 2000 L or AR 3000 L backpack batteries.



Thanks to the STIHL Noise Reduction System, the BGA 300 produces fewer high pitch frequencies often associated with cordless blowers, meaning operation is less intrusive for bystanders and is therefore suited for use in noise-sensitive areas such as schools, parks or around public amenities.

The maximum blowing force can be selected from three power setting options via the selector switch, allowing for efficient energy management and longer runtimes. Boost mode may also be selected to provide maximum power for the toughest clearing jobs. Furthermore, the new cordless blower features an LED power display and cruise control function to enable simple energy management and comfort.

• www.stihl.co.uk

EGO LBP8000E Backpack Blower: This cordless backpack blower is available for both domestic and professional use. Featuring EGO's PeakPower™ technology and a more powerful motor, it offers extra runtime and better performance.

It uses EGO's 56V ARC Lithium™ battery, that works across the entire EGO range. Each battery features EGO's unique KeepCool™ technology, intelligent power management, fast recharge plus other innovations designed to deliver convenience, quality and reliability.

Says Vince Brauns, Group Product Manager at EGO:



"The new LBP8000E ensures that clearing work is quicker and more efficient, without any of the noise or fumes of petrol tools. Our PeakPower™ system fully harnesses the potential of using two EGO batteries at once, making it possible to provide extra runtime and power.

"Designed with an improved user interface, control system and newer, more powerful motor, the LBP8000E represents a step change in comfortable, efficient working."

PeakPower™ combines the power of two EGO batteries for maximum output and up to two and a half hours of runtime. The new motor enhances air speed and delivers class-leading cordless equipment air volume of 1360m³/h. Upgraded PCBA cooling further improves durability, while the integrated tool stand helps keep the harness and batteries clean and dry.

• www.egopowerplus.co.uk

Husqvarna 550iBTX: This robust battery backpack blower combines high blowing capacity, low vibration and low noise levels. With a 14N blowing force and continuous 21N boost mode, this battery blower provides the



equivalent blowing capacity to petrol power, ensuring pro-level productivity and results when clearing thick layers of fallen foliage, debris and dirt from large areas.

It features an ergonomically designed, ventilated harness that significantly alleviates the strain on the body by providing hip and shoulder-assisted support, meaning professionals can maintain their focus on the job while maximising productivity. The blower also fulfils the IPX4 classification for rain resistance, ensuring a long-lasting and reliable tool that can be used all year round in all weather conditions. Additionally, it is equipped with an intuitive user interface, featuring glove-friendly buttons and a battery status indicator for convenient operation and enabling users to effectively plan their work based on remaining battery runtime.

• www.husqvarna.com/uk/leaf-blowers

Makita UB002C 36V: This backpack blower has a performance output that matches a 50cc petrol machine but with minimal noise and vibration.

The powerful UB002C features a simple variable speed control and produces a blowing force of 22 newtons, a maximum air volume of up to 19.0 m³ /min and an air velocity of up to 76.0 m/sec. The 36V power is supplied by the Makita PDC1200 portable backpack battery, which can be used with a range of compatible Makita cordless machines. The PDC1200 includes a 33Ah solid state battery and with the UB002C provides approximately a 45-minute continuous run-time at maximum power, offering most contractors enough to cover a day's work based on actual trigger time.



With the weight of the machine and battery transferred to the user's back, rather than supported by their arm, the UB002C can be operated more comfortably for longer. It is also IPX4 rated meaning it is showerproof and can therefore be used in changeable weather conditions.

The UB002C is available as a body only (UB002CZ) option or supplied with the PDC1200A02 portable battery pack (UB002CX3).

• www.makita.com

Kress Commercial 60V Backpack Blower: Ideal for all-weather landscaping, this combines lasting power with whisper-quiet operation, making it a reliable choice



year-round. The innovative eight minute CyberSystem battery ensures sustained performance without the hassle of cords, fuel or dead batteries. The ergonomic backpack design prioritises user comfort, allowing for extended, strain-free use. Rain or shine, the Kress blower is ready, thanks to its waterproof build. It can withstand the elements to keep projects on track.

It has impressive power – with a blowing force of 35 N – and has Ultra-Silent Technology, producing only 63dB of noise from 15 metres away. The Kress commercial leaf blower offers silent power, durability and ergonomic comfort, revolutionising the landscaping experience.

• www.kress.com

GKB Leaf Reducer: This offers an economic and environmentally friendly solution to large scale leaf collection – effectively mulching the material and returning it, and its nutrients, back into the surface to the benefit of impoverished soils.

In a single pass, the paddles on the Leaf Reducer collect the leaves before a turbine provides both initial fragmentation and the airflow needed to pull the material into the machine where it is further milled into a fine mulch. This is then returned to the surface via a rear ejector, which can be adjusted to a desired direction depending on the location.



The Leaf Reducer has been developed in direct response to demand from local authorities, looking for a more sustainable working method to using existing tools and trucks to collect and dispose of fallen leaves.

When compared to other conventional methods of leaf clearance, the GKB machine emits less than half of the CO₂ emissions per hectare of ground covered – and over a 200% reduction on the combination of blowing, vacuuming and composting of material.

The Leaf Reducer is available with a 1.5m working width, and an adjustable working height to treat areas with both low and higher heights of cut.

• www.gkbmachines.com

Redeem Turf Tidy: Available with a 1.8m working width, the Turf Tidy is a versatile scarifier collector, which can be used to effectively verti-cut, flail mow or collect leaves on a variety of different turf surfaces.

The fully floating head of the Turf Tidy follows ground contours ensuring accurate collection of leaves and other surface debris such as pine needles, cores or grass clippings. Powerful suction is provided by wind paddles creating updraft in conjunction with the blades, which ensures strong pick up of debris when the sweeper head is fitted, and a superior cut quality when mowing or verti-cutting.



At just over 1500kg, the Turf Tidy 3000 offers a high work rate without demanding a large tractor, meaning that it only requires a 25hp for sweeping, up to 45hp for other operations. Offering a 3.0m³ (106cu.ft) hopper capacity, it features a hydraulic high-tip mechanism, lifting and offloading the hopper contents at a maximum height of 2.17m for quick and convenient emptying straight into a loader or trailer.

For sweeping on hard surfaces, an optional brush head improves leaf and debris collection or, for work on softer ground, the Turf Tidy 3000 can be specified with four rear tyres to help minimise ground pressure.

Easy access to the rotor makes for simple removal and installation of different blades, improving efficiency and reducing machinery downtime.

Trilo Blower Range: These selection of blowers are designed with large capacities to ensure a far-reaching, effective airflow in a given direction. Powered by a 30hp tractor, the Trilo B7 is a compact, light-weight blower with a reverse exhaust nozzle which can be operated from the driver's seat. By setting the nozzle downwards, the B7 is capable of cleaning both sides of a path simultaneously. High-power combined with ease of adjustment and optimal



manoeuvrability means the B7 is ideal for leaf clearance on car parks, roads or roadside verges.

Moving up through the range the BL960 is one of the most powerful blowers on the market, which requires a 50hp tractor, has a capacity of 385m³/min and delivers an airspeed of 75m/s which makes it a popular choice for large areas such as parks or sports fields. In addition, and like the B7, the exhaust spout can be hydraulically adjusted to deliver powerful airflow in any desired direction.

For effective leaf clearance in smaller areas, Trilo also offer the SU range of vacuum loaders which facilitate the rapid vacuuming of leaves, litter, grass and wood chippings in a compact, easily transportable unit. Mounted on a towable chassis and available in two sizes – the SU40 and SU60, which offers a more powerful motor and features an electrical starter engine – both are equipped with a wander hose for convenient, effective cleaning of restricted-access spaces into an awaiting truck or trailer.

• www.trilo.com

Billy Goat X3000CE: For large-scale areas and major clean up tasks, the X3000CE Zero Turn Stand-On Blower is the optimal choice. Equipped with a high-performance 23hp Vanguard engine, this blower delivers an incredible air velocity of up to 226 mph and airflow of 184+ m³ per minute. It provides extraordinary leaf-clearing capabilities, allowing users to conquer significant cleanup projects with unparalleled speed and efficiency.

What sets the X3000CE apart from other blowers is its remarkable zero-turn manoeuvrability. The intuitive steering system enables seamless pivoting, making navigating around obstacles, trees, and intricate landscapes an effortless process. This not only saves users valuable time but also reduces the physical strain often associated with manual leaf raking.

This blower compliments others in the Billy Goat range to include the F1002V Wheeled leaf blower for medium sized outdoor spaces and the F602V blower ideal for garden spaces.

• www.billygoat.co.uk



Makita®



A TRUE PETROL REPLACEMENT WITH LOW NOISE



DIRECT CONNECT BACK-PACK BLOWER: UB020C
1,200Wh BACK-PACK BATTERY: PDC1200



Battery Connection

You can effortlessly attach the 1,200Wh high-capacity battery with just one simple action. The battery is equipped with a fuel gauge that displays its status using four LED indicators.

WET
GUARD
IPX4
RATED



Smart Design

By transferring the weight of both the battery and the tool body from the user's arm to their back, we have effectively minimised arm fatigue. Wet guard IPX4 rated for use in rain.



LXT

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Battery failure

Buying genuine spares and accessories for power tools and grounds maintenance equipment is always recommended, but it is especially important when sourcing batteries for cordless machines. **Tony Coleman**, Technical Services Manager at **Makita** outlines the issues and how to identify non-genuine products



Genuine Makita battery

With increasing pressure on businesses due to rising costs in almost every area, it may seem sensible to purchase batteries at the lowest possible price. However, these low-cost, non-genuine batteries deliver inferior performance, can be hazardous to the user and damaging to the tool to which it is connected.

There are broadly two types of non-genuine battery. The first is products from third-party manufacturers that claim to be equivalent to the genuine version despite being cheaper. The other type is those products that are cheaply made but advertised as genuine. These are often purchased inadvertently and are sometimes hard to spot. Unfortunately, this is not a minor issue. The campaign group Electrical Safety First (ESF) reports that one in three people in the UK has inadvertently purchased a counterfeit electrical item online.

Issues associated with non-genuine batteries

One of the most common problems of non-genuine batteries is poor performance, both in terms of power output and runtimes. This makes work harder and more time consuming – ultimately impacting productivity. Poor performance is often because these batteries lack the investment in engineering and product development that enables modern, high-quality lithium ion batteries to deliver the performance that professionals require.

Another major issue with non-genuine batteries is safety. The high energy density of modern power tool

batteries means that precision engineering and thorough testing is required to ensure stability through the control of charge and discharge current, cell voltage and temperature. It is very unlikely that this attention to detail, investment and testing will have been present in the design and manufacturing of the lowest cost batteries available. Without this there is a real risk of thermal runaway occurring, which can lead to the battery overheating, catching fire or, in the worst cases, exploding.

Furthermore, non-genuine batteries not only have a shorter lifespan but can also affect the longevity of the machines they are used with. Genuine batteries will typically have been engineered to work with the tool and charger to prevent damage and unnecessary wear and tear. The use of non-genuine batteries prevents this technology from working, removing an effective protection against damage. As an example, Makita batteries, cordless tools and chargers feature technology that allows communication and exchange of data. This means the tool will shut down automatically if an overload or overheating in the battery or the tool is identified. It also automatically stops before the battery becomes over-discharged. Also, if the battery is warm when it is connected to the charger this will be detected and the charger will cool it before recharging begins.

Identifying non-genuine products

Third-party 'equivalent' batteries are generally simple to spot as long as the buyer is careful to check that the product is made by the manufacturer of the tools.

However, this is no guarantee that a counterfeit product will not be purchased inadvertently. Imitation products are often sold through well-known online marketplaces to give buyers a false confidence that they are genuine.

One of the clearest signs of a poor quality product is the price. Unfortunately, if 'it seems too good to be true', it probably is. It is also important to look carefully at the product itself and the packaging for indications that it might be counterfeit. This includes spelling errors, variations in the design of the logo or signs that the logo has been copied from elsewhere.

When purchasing a product online, these indications may not be easy to see and unscrupulous sellers may use images of the product that have been taken from websites selling genuine items. To help customers identify genuine batteries, tool manufacturers will often include unique design details on their products that are difficult to replicate. For example, Makita's STAR connectivity mark is included on all genuine Makita lithium-ion batteries. Ultimately, the best way to ensure a battery is genuine is to only purchase from trusted suppliers, such as manufacturer authorised dealers and merchants. They will only stock genuine products and so customers can be assured of the quality.

What to do with non-genuine batteries

If there is any doubt about the authenticity of a battery, it should not be used. The first step should be to



Counterfeit Makita battery

contact the seller to confirm that it is a genuine item. If there is still a concern, it is advisable to contact the tool manufacturer as they will be able to advise if the battery can be inspected at one of its facilities or by an approved agent.

Due to poor quality materials, design and testing, non-genuine batteries present a hazard to users, can be damaging to the tools and will invalidate warranties. As such these cheap products can prove to be a false economy. Professionals should keep a look out for signs that a newly purchased battery is not genuine and only buy from trusted suppliers.

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Market appraisal

The year has gone in a flash says **Paula Warman**. Now is the time to take stock, she says, to evaluate marketing strategies during the quietest months of the year



As a coach and when presenting at shows and events, one topic I like to discuss is the convergence of social media, lead generation and business expansion for landscaping companies. These topics have garnered significant interest amongst my landscaper's coaching community

and are ones I'll like to share as we head into the quieter months of the year.

When analysing a marketing strategy, the first step is to create an ideal customer persona or avatar. This is simple task, with several approaches. Start by considering past exceptional clients and what made them stand out. Also, reflect on clients whose projects you aspired to work on but didn't secure. Profile these potential clients as well. This process should provide relevant information to craft an ideal client persona.

Establishing an idea target market and client is critical. This enables you to tailor your messaging to resonate with them and optimise your marketing efforts for greater success.

When exploring various lead generation and marketing techniques, try to create a list of ideas. A small business owner may not have the time or budget to pursue all of them, so specificity is essential depending on a business's stage, available marketing budget and the time that can be dedicated to marketing.

Here are some ideas to spark your creativity:

- Ensure your website is not just a presence but a lead generator.
- Keep your *Google My Business* listing up to date.
- Showcase client testimonials.
- Use email marketing to engage existing clients, follow up on open quotes and recover lost enquiries.

- Consider Google Ads.
- Actively engage on social media, both through organic posts and paid advertising.
- Network online and offline and attend industry events.
- Utilise print ads, leaflets and brochures.
- Seek local business partnerships.
- Maintain a blog and work on SEO (search engine optimization).
- Explore sponsorships, charity events and community involvement.
- Enhance online listings and profiles.
- Embrace content marketing.

The key is to regularly test and measure the effectiveness of your chosen strategies. Understand that not all marketing efforts will yield immediate success, but the crucial aspect is early detection, allowing for adjustments and further attempts. Monitoring metrics such as the number of leads, cost per lead, conversion rates and cost per sale is vital to ensure that your marketing investments are delivering a positive return on investment (ROI). For landscapers, where projects often reach six figures, spending £1000 on a marketing campaign that secures a £100,000 project is a significant victory.

If you lack expertise in content creation or managing Google Ads campaigns, consider outsourcing some or all of your marketing activities. However, exercise caution and ensure that your cash flow forecast supports this decision. If it isn't feasible at the moment, create a plan outlining the steps necessary to make marketing outsourcing viable in the future. Set clear goals and work towards them.

I collaborate with landscapers one-on-one, helping them grow their businesses, set and achieve goals and discussing effective marketing strategies are my passions. So do get in touch for any help you may need. There are still two months left in the year—don't let them slip away.

Paula Warman is the Landscapers' Coach, working with landscapers to develop and grow their businesses through her Levelling Up mastermind and 1:1 coaching package. If you need her help please get in touch on the details below to book in for a free discovery call.

paula@thelandscaperscoach.co.uk | www.thelandscaperscoach.co.uk | [@thelandscaperscoach](https://www.instagram.com/thelandscaperscoach)

Or, check out Paula's [The Limitless Landscaper's Podcast](#) on your favourite podcast player.

ICL's Greenheaven cultivar provides results for polo club

A world renowned polo club - the Black Bears Polo Club in Oxfordshire - has been relying on ICL's Greenheaven cultivar in an attempt to increase the percentage of tall fescue on the pitch.

The pitches at the Lower Bolney Farm club has deservedly gained a reputation for having some of the best facilities in the UK. The five polo fields are kept in immaculate condition by a dedicated team headed up by Miles Properjohn – Pitch 5 has even been declared to be the “best field in the UK – if not the world”.

Says Miles: “The pitch was originally sown with tall fescue and we have since used other cultivars for a few seasons. We are now keen to build back the percentage of tall fescue as we see its benefit in providing a hard wearing, low input and great playing surface for polo. The polo schedule is very busy here and the players have incredibly high expectations of how the pitch should play.

“Whenever choosing a seed we always refer to the BSPB/STRI guide and we also do our own plot trial of any new seed to assess its germination speed and visual characteristics. Greenheaven was no exception.”

Greenheaven, from ICL, is a European-bred tall fescue which presents a midgreen compact growth habit. A fine leaf texture combined with excellent disease tolerance makes Greenheaven a very visually appealing variety.

Miles and the team sowed Greenheaven in September 2022 as part of a post season renovation: “Germination and development were very good after overseeding, and we found Greenheaven to be a finer more attractive cultivar than other versions,” he continues.

“The tall fescue has been extremely hard wearing under a high level of wear from all the matches. It has a dense root structure and has great stability in the turf.”



Greenheaven also features excellent drought tolerance, something which Miles believes is essential.

“When making decisions on species and cultivars it is important to consider drought tolerance,” explains Miles. “Irrigation is used to provide the correct firmness and traction for the ponies and players, and so is used for playability more than plant health.

“Irrigation is time consuming, so the sward will have periods when it isn't applied and so therefore the pitch needs to have excellent drought tolerance. In the hot and dry summers of 2018 and 2021 it was the only thing that was thriving. Water security and responsible water usage will be a factor for the future, so affects the decision-making process.”

Commenting on the use of Greenheaven at Black Bears Polo Club, ICL's Martyn Parrish, says: “It's been very much a collaborative effort learning from each other along the way, listening to Miles' unique needs and requirements to produce a top polo pitch and providing the correct product advice and solutions to meet those needs.”

Private college achieves flexibility and finish with a new TDR-X

Jason Wright, head groundsman of Framlingham College, has been delighted with the results of a Progressive TDR-X contour mower within a month of its delivery. The new TDR-X is ticking the boxes of build quality, manoeuvrability and high standard of finish across the 80 acres of the Suffolk college grounds.

Sport plays a big part at the college where pupils can join from the age of three, with Jason and his team of three full-time grounds staff maintaining athletics, cricket and hockey surfaces in the summer, then switching to

rugby during the winter months.

On choosing the TDR-X Jason says: “We demonstrated various makes and models but agreed that the Progressive was the most manoeuvrable and would be the most versatile to use on both our sports and wildlife areas. It also suited us weight-wise to work alongside our existing tractor and fleet of equipment.”

The mower, exclusively available from Vanmac UK, features three independently floating decks which promise to closely follow undulations, delivering a



total cutting width of 3.2m and easily adjustable cutting height range of between 10mm and 85mm. Along with other machines in the Progressive range, the TDR-X features Pro Lift-N-Turn™ technology, which enables the operator to temporarily lift the decks with the PTO still engaged, increasing overall productivity.

“Tomlinson Groundcare Ltd delivered our TDR-X at the end of June and after training, we put it to work straight away. We’ve found already that set-up and changing the height of cut takes minutes and we have also used it in the wet with impressive results,” says Jason. “In addition, it gives us the ability to lift the height to maintain our rough areas which has been another plus – the versatility we have with this as an all-around machine versus our previous fine turf mower.”

New turf increases insect diversity five fold compared to conventional lawn

Yorkshire based grower, Lindum Turf, has created a species rich turf – a mixture of wildflowers and grasses that can provide a far greater diversity of plant species than an average monoculture lawn.

The turf can be cut short like a conventional lawn or maintained less often to produce a beautiful tapestry of colour, creating a natural, wildflower meadow effect in a garden. Crucially, the turf can withstand the day-to-day rigours of family life in a garden, while increasing the number of visiting insects visiting more than five-fold.

According to Lindum’s managing director Stephen Fell the success of species rich turf is based on the combination of carefully selected grasses and wildflowers.

“We spent a long time experimenting with different combinations of plants,” he explains. “The secret is to select a variety of non-competitive grasses that will withstand being walked on and intersperse these with wildflowers and clovers that don’t grow too high, but will attract plenty of insects.

“We’ve created a versatile lawn that can replace standard grass, but will vastly increase the biodiversity of the lawn and, by extension, the entire garden. If you let this turf grow out a little rather than cutting it back every couple of weeks, it is amazing to see the sheer numbers of butterflies and pollinators it will attract.

“Biodiversity in the UK is critically low and as the vast majority of people don’t own a lot of land, they probably think there isn’t much they can do about it. But if you add up all the gardens in the UK, and the green spaces like parks and playing fields, that comes to a huge amount of land spread across cities, suburbs and the countryside. If everyone did a bit with whatever space they have, that would make a huge difference.”

“Initiatives such as No Mow May are simply not

effective,” laments Stephen. “Letting a monoculture grass lawn grow for a few weeks makes little difference. To help pollinators we need to increase the biodiversity in the lawn.”

The turf is grown on a plastic-free growing medium so laying it does not introduce single-use, non-biodegradable plastics into the soil.

“You cannot make environmental claims about turf if you are burying single-use plastics in the soil and letting them degrade into microplastics,” states Stephen.

“That is why we use a 100% natural, non-polluting growing medium. As an industry, we need to be making steps towards protecting our planet, not polluting it further.”



Stephen Fell introduces new Species Rich Turf.

Bernhard Academy releases educational programmes

The Bernhard Academy has unveiled its new programme of educational courses for greenkeepers, turf professionals and mechanics.

The courses offer opportunities for attendees to take away real-world skills and solutions that can enhance the performance of their turf maintenance facility on a day-to-day basis.

Managing Director of Bernhard and Company, Steven Nixon, says: “We are thrilled to see this new programme of courses come to life after months of research and development. We’ve worked hard to truly understand what it is that the turf industry needs, to continue moving forward, so we are excited to offer courses that address those needs head-on.”

Bernhard Academy has partnered with respected golf venues around the UK and installed bespoke facilities tailored to turf maintenance workshops. Each of the new courses will be delivered in a world-class learning environment at either Moortown Golf Club or Royal Norwich Golf Club in England – in addition to the

Bernhard Academy headquarters in Haverhill - and Gleneagles in Scotland. There will also be an interactive online webinar series, which will be delivered live from the Bernhard Academy in Haverhill.

The new programme features educational courses that fall under two categories: Management or Technical. Both categories will cover a range of essential topics to help achieve success in turf maintenance.

Says Craig Haldane, Director of Education for the Bernhard Academy: “We are committed to empowering individuals in the sports turf and club management industry with the knowledge and skills they need to excel in their roles and careers. Our courses are designed to meet industry demands and have been created to allow attendees to take the next step in their career. We look forward to welcoming passionate participants that are eager to learn and continue driving this great industry forwards.”

Course booking is available at www.bernhardacademy.co.uk



GroundsFest announces education fund



Wiltshire College and University Centre will be the first to benefit from the GroundsFest Education Fund with

Organisers of annual trade event GroundsFest has launched an education fund that will invest profits from its event back into the industry.

The GroundsFest Education Fund has been designed to help students at land-based colleges overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education. The aim of the Fund is to not only support and enhance a student's education experience, but to encourage more people into the industry by making education more accessible.

Through profits generated from GroundsFest, students will be able to reach their full potential by obtaining funding for a wide range of items such as course literature, stationary, tools, laptops, computers and other electrical goods, driving lessons and accredited training courses on subjects including machinery, weed management, sports turf maintenance, lawn care, arboriculture and many more.

"Unfortunately, the number of young people embarking on a career in grounds management is in decline and collectively, we should be doing all we can to change this. Education is the first step into the industry but the numbers coming through and qualifying are worryingly low," says GroundsFest Director Christopher Bassett.

"After several conversations, we were shocked to hear that students are being forced out of education or

are being prevented from entering education due to not having the money to purchase necessary items. Our aim was to always give back to the industry through the event and therefore we are extremely proud to be launching The GroundsFest Education Fund."

For the first year the scheme will be trialled at Wiltshire College and University Centre before being rolled out nationwide. Victoria Fiander, Assessor in Horticulture and Bradley Tennant, Sports Turf Lecturer, both from Wiltshire College, were instrumental in the development of the Fund.

Commenting on the new scheme, Bradley says: "This is a fantastic initiative for students to access opportunities they may otherwise not have. I would have loved to have had an opportunity like this having personally paid for my own certificates such as spraying, tractor driving and chainsaw tickets. This is a key area that holds many back from pay rises or even progression within their workplace."

"Land-based colleges are the point of entry for the vast majority of those wanting to work in horticulture, from sports turf stadiums to the local garden centre. It's vital we support our colleges. There are currently only 12 land-based colleges within the UK, which is a worrying number. The industry is struggling from top to bottom and education is the way forward."



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The Essential Tree Selection Guide

The changing climate has put a spotlight on the importance of trees. They are essential life-giving plants that deliver a vast array of hidden benefits such as cooling shade, rainfall interception and carbon capture. But, say authors Henrik Sjöman and Arit Anderson only if they are planted in the right place.

International tree expert Henrik Sjöman together with garden designer Arit Anderson have dedicated themselves to producing a visionary tree selection guide called simply *The Essential Tree Selection Guide*. Aimed for selection within the world's temperate regions, the book opens with a clear explanation of ecosystem services (hidden benefits) and how trees deliver them. Some trees excel at particular roles such as providing food for pollinators at times when it is scarce or filtering air pollution. Others have adapted to develop useful tolerances that enable them to cope with extreme conditions such as drought, low-nutrient soil and high winds.

The illustrated guide underlines the need to observe trees in their natural environment, in order to understand what they require to establish and grow to their full potential. Only then can they selflessly provide multiple ecosystem benefits.

"I found this approach to selecting trees a truly inspirational one even after a lifetime of working with trees," says Kevin Martin, Head of Tree Collections, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew who wrote the book's Foreword.

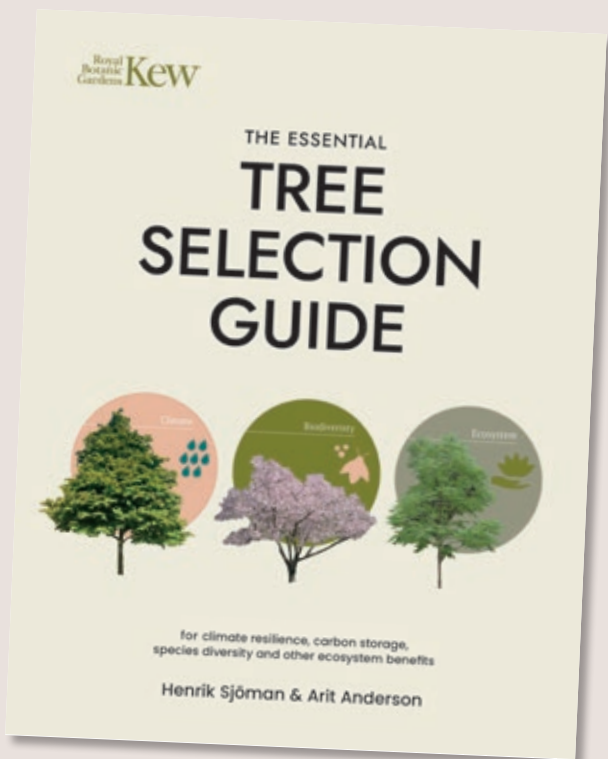
The main part of the book is a unique A-Z tree directory based on Henrik's research and observation of trees across climatic zones. It represents more than 500 trees chosen for their ecosystem benefits, resilience and a host of other criteria that will ensure their continuing contribution to our future gardens and landscapes. A further quick-reference tree selection table provides key attributes for each species at a glance.

Backed by the latest scientific research, *The Essential Tree Selection Guide* explains:

- How to maximise a tree's chance of reaching maturity and having a long life for effective carbon sequestration.
- How to select trees for specific situations such as drought or storm conditions, or nutrient deficiencies.
- How different trees give different types of shade, and what would work best for your site
- All trees help to mitigate flooding to some degree, but this book tells you which are the most effective.
- The importance of succession in tree selection, and how that affects your choice of tree

- The significance of considering trees planted outside your boundaries when making your choice of which tree to plant, particularly in a garden environment.
- The contribution that trees make to soil regeneration.
- How every garden and patch of green contributes essential benefits to the wider environment.

This important new tree selection guide marks a step change in approach that will lead to more trees reaching their full potential and a richer environment for future generations. And the book provides vital reference for all – whether for a homeowner making choices within their garden, contractors managing open spaces to landscape architects designing an urban landscape.



The Essential Tree Selection Guide

By Henrik Sjöman and Arit Anderson

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