

# THE LANDSCAPER

JAN/FEB 2026

THE NUMBER 1 MAGAZINE FOR CONTRACTORS, GARDEN AND TURF PROFESSIONALS

## BTME PREVIEW

**Jim Croxton interview**

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### **Winners in waiting:**

APL Awards: Biodiverse, sustainable schemes

### **Landscaper's Coach:**

Work smarter this year

### **Client disputes:**

Five ways to avoid a fix in '26

### **Innovation:**

UK's greenest primary school

### **Compact tractors:**

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Despite persistent gloom over the UK economy, sector trade shows appear to have enjoyed a bumper 2025, with the major events reporting record visitor numbers. The trend seems set to continue at BTME in January as organiser BIGGA predicts a sold out exhibition and expanding Continue to Learn seminar programme (page 27).

This year will witness major milestones as turfcare machinery maker Redexim celebrates 45 years since launch (page 34) while power tool manufacturer Stihl turns 100 (page 41).

Compact tractor innovation shows no sign of slowing – we report on CTs fresh from the factory and out on site (page 22).

Managing outdoor space is a complex, time-consuming process that demands precision and efficiency. One major contractor explains how they handle things (page 46).

Irrigation systems are evolving as unpredictable rainfall kicks in increasingly across the UK and beyond. Drip feeding brings a host of benefits to help ensure plantlife is sustainably watered (page 44).

Greg

**Greg Rhodes, Editor**  
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**Cover story:**  
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# APL Awards 2026 finalists

## "reaching new heights"



The 2026 awards of the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) feature more finalists than ever before, umbrella body the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) has revealed.

No fewer than 123 schemes showcase and celebrate excellence among the HTA's landscaper and garden designer members, it says.

Judging took place over three intensive days. Led by a panel of respected industry professionals, the judges used their wealth of knowledge and experience to meticulously evaluate and select the best from an array of outstanding projects.

The judging panel was chaired by Bob Sweet (BBC Gardeners' World Live), with Rod Winrow (Garden House Design), Laura Anstiss (Oakmore Green), Rupert Keys (TASK Academy) and Phil Tremayne (APL General Manager).

Due to the exceptional level of skilled entries, two new categories have been introduced for the 2026 awards: Outdoor Living and Waterfalls and Pond Features, bringing the total number of categories to 22.

"In today's world, providing exceptional service is no longer a choice but a necessity," said Laura Anstiss, APL

Awards judge and director of Oakmore Green Ltd.

"Customers have more options than ever before, with media at their fingertips, and their expectations are higher than ever. To stay ahead of the competition, businesses must prioritise excellence and ensure they meet the highest standards.

"The Awards bring together industry professionals to demonstrate just how passionate and dedicated our industry members are. It is a great privilege to be part of it and to see first hand just how incredibly talented everyone is."

APL general manager Phil Tremayne added: "It seems impossible that every year the standard of the APL gardens gets better and better but this year once again, APL members have excelled and the quality has improved. Well done. All entrants should be very proud of their achievements"

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on Friday, 13 March 2026, at The Brewery, 52 Chiswell Street, London EC1Y 4SA.



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# Talent shines at WorldSkills finals



Hundreds of competitors showcased their talents in over 40 skill areas at the WorldSkills UK National Finals, held across various venues in South Wales in late November.

Construction and Infrastructure: Landscaping (CIL) and Foundation Skills: Horticulture (FSH) were the two competitions organising partner the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) supported.

The APL designs the skills component to meet the needs of employers and ensure the competition remains an essential way to raise standards in apprenticeship and training programmes, attracting more young people into UK landscaping and environmental horticulture.

APL general manager Phil Tremayne hailed landscaping winner Archie Matthews and foundation skills horticulture winner Junior Rozhon, praising "the incredible expertise, creativity and resilience of these young professionals. All the finalists should be proud of their performance and the skills and abilities they've demonstrated".

The Construction and Infrastructure: Landscaping WorldSkills UK is an individual competition in which finalists have sixteen and a half hours to build the same garden to the same specifications. It is judged against criteria set by the APL to determine who has created the highest quality garden.

Judges also consider health and safety and competitors' work processes. For the planting section of the challenge, finalists work with a selection of plants to create stand-out schemes.

"Our finalists are the new generation of high-flyers that will give UK employers a competitive edge," said Ben Blackledge, WorldSkills UK chief executive.

The Foundation Skills: Horticulture WorldSkills UK

final, held at Cardiff and Vale Centre Campus, showcased the skills of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or additional learning needs (ALN).

Finalists have two and a half hours to plant up seven planters – three identical ones for indoor arrangements, three of differing sizes for outdoor arrangements and one cone-shaped hanging basket.

Competitors are encouraged to create their own eye-catching designs using the plants provided. Once planted, the next phase of the competition is to merchandise their arrangements. There is a planogram to follow but also plenty of space and props to create an attractive display. They are judged on accessibility, creativity, adherence to the given theme, as well as health and safety and work processes.

[www.landscaper.org.uk](http://www.landscaper.org.uk)

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

## CIL winners

**Gold:** Archie Matthews, Myerscough College

**Silver:** Luke Donald, College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

**Bronze:** Cameron Gilbert, College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

## FSH winners

**Gold:** Junior Rozhon, Pembrokeshire College

**Silver:** Matthew Duncombe, Pembrokeshire College

**Bronze:** Aimee-Leigh Phillips, Riverside College

## Event sponsors

J A Jones, Landscape Plus, Bradstone, Makita, Composite Prime and Pugh's Garden Village.



# Turf takes centre stage

UK turf growers, suppliers and sector specialists gather on 2 July for a major meet-up in the industry calendar.

The Turfgrass Growers Association (TGA) Demonstration Day is the trade body's flagship technical and industry event, to be hosted this year by Grasslands Turf.

The day forms a key part of the TGA's continuing commitment to supporting the UK turfgrass sector through knowledge exchange, industry representation and the promotion of the TGA standards, it states.

Exhibitor and sponsorship opportunities are available, offering companies the chance to connect directly with professional turf growers and promote products, services and innovations to a highly targeted audience. Delegate tickets are now on sale, with further information to be announced via the TGA website and social media channels.

"The Demonstration Day is always a highlight in the TGA calendar," said TGA chair Richard Owen, "and is an invaluable opportunity for growers and suppliers to connect, share knowledge and showcase innovation across the industry.

"Events like this play an important role in supporting high standards, collaboration and the continued professionalism of the turf sector," he added. The event



will conclude with a celebratory dinner.

The day will include:

- Live machinery and equipment demonstrations
- Exhibitor stands from leading suppliers
- Opportunities for companies to run on-field trials or demonstrations
- Networking with growers, agronomists, technical specialists and manufacturers
- Guidance aligned with TGA Standards, sustainability priorities and best practice.

[www.turfgrass.co.uk](http://www.turfgrass.co.uk)

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# What the post-Budget reality really means for your business

Hard work won't be enough to thrive in 2026, cautions **Paula Warman**



Every Budget creates headlines. But for landscapers, garden designers and gardeners, the real impact is rarely found in the soundbites – it appears months later in pricing, cash flow, labour costs and, ultimately, stress levels.

With an eye firmly on 2026, one thing is clear: the next phase of the market will reward planning, leadership and commercial discipline far more than just hard work.

For the past decade, many landscape businesses grew simply by working harder. The years ahead will demand something different: working smarter.

## Recalculating profitability: your numbers must change

Rising labour costs, materials inflation and higher overheads mean many businesses are now trading on far tighter margins than they realise. One of the biggest risks I see in coaching is landscapers still pricing jobs using assumptions that worked three or four years ago.

If your wage bill rises by 8 to 10%, materials climb again and finance costs increase, your old mark-up will quietly stop protecting your profit. In real terms, many businesses are unknowingly working harder for less.

Now is the time to:

- Properly recalculate your true hourly labour cost
- Rebuild your overhead recovery into every quote
- Stress-test what happens if jobs overrun by 5 to 10%

If you don't rebuild your pricing model now, 2026 will quickly expose the cracks.

## How spending cuts will quietly affect demand

Government spending decisions don't only affect public contracts, they shape consumer behaviour. When household budgets tighten, clients don't stop spending altogether. They become more selective, more price-aware and more likely to phase projects.

In practice, this means:

- More demand for smaller, staged projects
- More focus on repair, renovation and optimisation
- Higher resistance to vague or poorly justified pricing

The businesses that win won't be the cheapest but the clearest. Clear scopes, clear value, clear outcomes.

## The three most underestimated operational risks

From my work across the industry, three risks consistently catch out business owners:

1. Cash-flow strain through seasonality – Profit on paper doesn't pay wages in January or February.
  2. Over-reliance on one or two key team members – Illness, burnout or resignation can paralyse a business.
  3. Poor job costing discipline – When actual costs aren't tracked accurately, mistakes quietly repeat.
- All three are manageable. None improve by accident.



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

Or, check out Paula's **The Limitless Landscaper's Podcast** on your favourite podcast player.



### Why 'holding your prices' isn't a strategy

Many landscapers tell me they're "holding prices to stay competitive". In reality, this often means slowly eroding their own future. Value-based quoting is becoming essential, not optional.

Clients will still pay strong prices in 2025/26 but only when they clearly understand:

- What problem you're solving
- Why your solution is better
- What certainty and reassurance they're buying

Your sales process must sell outcomes, not just paying, planting and pergolas.

### The two business pivots that will matter most

In 2026, two shifts will separate the most successful businesses from those constantly under pressure.

#### 1. From operator to leader

If the business still relies entirely on you to quote, sell, manage and fix everything, growth - and resilience - will remain limited. Delegation, systems and leadership development are no longer luxuries.

#### 2. From reactive to planned

Weekly firefighting must give way to structured planning:

90-day forecasts, capacity planning, pipeline tracking and clear financial targets.

### Your 2026 roadmap

This next phase of the industry isn't about fear but preparation. Landscapers who thrive in 2026 will be those who:

- Know their true numbers
- Control their cashflow
- Lead their teams deliberately
- Price for sustainability, not survival

Hard work built this industry. Smart planning will define its future.

### Want help?

The Landscaper's Growth Roadmap is an intensive four-week coaching programme designed specifically for landscapers, garden designers and gardeners who want clarity, structure and real commercial control.

This is not generic business coaching. It is built exclusively around the realities of running a landscaping business in today's market and preparing it properly for the years ahead.

If 2026 matters to you, the work starts now.

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# Avoid a fix in 26

Stay alive to these five top tips to power through the year, suggests **Lynne Taylor**



How many of you start a new year with resolutions and plans, only to find yourself at the end of that year having let them all fall away then frantically promising yourself you'll definitely do it next year?

Like a new year, most disputes begin with good intentions and friendly relationships but sadly end up in claims, compensation or courtrooms.

While many are due to technical failure, even more have a similar pattern - and crucially are completely avoidable.

Below are my top five most important controls to put into place and keep for avoiding disputes in 2026.

## 1. Specifications

Many garden and landscape projects are often vague in their details, especially when a design has not been produced. Discussions typically take place between the homeowner and contractor, with generic details and wish list items, leaving the project wide open to interpretation and assumptions made on both sides.

And you know what they say about assuming. It's dangerous because you might make an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me'.

Then, when an installation doesn't meet a client's unspoken expectation, conflict shortly follows.

When carrying out expert witness works, a lack of

clarity at the start of a project can often be pinpointed as the loose thread that unravels the scheme. While homeowners may not understand the technical aspects, as an industry professional, providing fully itemised specifications can help.

Quotations with detailed breakdowns including depths, quantities and materials make it clear from the start for both parties. If the garden does not have a design, a simple clear drawing can also help.

## 2. Site records

Good site records are a must. When a dispute arises, showing what happened and not just saying what happened can save you time and money. This should start from the moment you first speak to the client and set foot on the site during a survey. Recording details such as ground conditions, existing features and issues and areas of existing damage can help prevent the blame winging your way.

Photograph and record every stage of the build, especially groundworks such as excavations, sub-base preparations and drainage installation, right through to the finished works. A daily site record is a great way to note labour, site activities, materials, plant use, deliveries, obstructions and weather and any delays these might cause for example.



### 3. Variations and agreements

One of the biggest pitfalls contractors are prone to is verbal agreements with clients. Eager to please and looking for an easy project, contractors who do not keep a record of variations and agreements that occur during construction, more often than not, find themselves out of pocket. Even minor changes need written variation agreements before you begin implementing the client's request.

Changes and additions impact your profit margin, your time, expected completion date and the liability of your business.

Informal agreements made verbally on site are difficult to enforce and while at the time your client may be happy to accept that you need to make a small alteration to the layout or materials, it might just be used against you when the final payment is due.

### 4. Standards

Following standards isn't just good practice, it's your line of defence. When things go wrong, expert witnesses and the courts look to recognised industry standards to determine whether the contractor acted reasonably. Even when a standard wasn't explicitly specified, failing to comply can significantly weaken your case.

Implementing standards and refreshing your team's knowledge set the foundation for correct expectations and professionalism from day one.

### 5. Health and safety

Health and safety (H&S) is paramount. It's not just a tick box exercise but there to save and protect lives. H&S doesn't clock off and should be viewed as a non-negotiable in every business, no matter if you're a sole trader or a team of hundreds.

From ensuring you are complying with legalities to protecting your staff, clients and anyone who may come in contact with your project, a failure in H&S can shape a dispute outcome to turn it in to a criminal case rather than a civil one.

Make 2026 the year to speak to a health and safety specialist to ensure you and your team are safe, protected and covered. Strong safety compliance doesn't just reduce accidents, it strengthens your defensibility, professionalism and contractual position.

Many disputes I've been involved with fail to provide clear documentation, records of communication and agreements, or strong site accounts, many of which would have helped their case. If you aim to stay out of a fix in 2026, start with these five tips. Your clients, your team and your future self will thank you.

*Lynne Taylor is an independent landscaping expert witness and owner of VirtuScapes, who has carried out various reports on landscape disputes for commercial and domestic projects.*

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# Biodiversity big trend among finalists

Among the finalists in the APL 2026 Awards is a strong emphasis on designing for sustainability and biodiversity, says **Gillian Taylor**



Gillian Taylor

The awards reward technical excellence, creativity and a commitment to quality. The judges had a difficult task this year thanks to the remarkably high standard of entries and made their deliberations over an intensive three days. Every entry receives a judge site visit so they can say: "Is this a garden I would like to spend time in."

The criteria they consider include:

- Quality of materials and construction
- Consistency of hard landscaping – steps, terraces, decking
- Plant selection, planting techniques and suitability for the site
- Client satisfaction
- Positive action for enhanced biodiversity and sustainability
- Health and safety considerations
- Overall finish and aesthetic of the garden
- Challenging issues and problem solving

Two finalists in the Soft Landscaping category, where horticultural excellence is key, caught my eye. Here the judges are focussing not only on the choice of plants but also their associations, density of planting and maturity.

## **The Perennial Country Garden** by *Raine Garden Design Ltd*

The outstanding plant choice here makes this a strong candidate. Vertical interest is provided by the dark foliage of multi-stemmed trees underplanted with perennials including Nepeta, Alchemilla and Astrantia. Pleached trees and raised beds add structure. Strong winter interest will be provided by the yew balls dotted through the garden to give continuity. The garden is full of fragrance, colour and charm.

## **From Field to Family Wildlife Haven** by *Ellicar Natural Pools and Gardens*







An extremely high level of quality in its planting and integration into the landscape is the essence here - testament to the skill of garden designer Sarah Murch and her landscaping team. The curves of the paths are softened by overflowing perennial plants in a muted colour palette. The variety of flower shapes provides food for many types of pollinators and the grasses add movement to the scene.

Ellicar also reached the final in the Decking Feature category.

Their Dulwich Decking entry is an elegant and well-designed natural swimming pool set in a London garden surrounded by mature trees, which presented a challenge when siting the pool. Root disruption had to be minimised, as did leaf fall on to the water from the tree canopies. In less than a year, the natural looking pool has blended into its surroundings and is the “ultimate

outdoor living space”.

A new category was added this year: Waterfalls and Pond Features

D U Waterscapes have two gardens of contrasting styles in the final selection. The judges were looking for water features natural in appearance, environmentally friendly blending into the client’s surroundings.

Their Wild Recreational Stream would not look out of place in the wildest of countryside. Beautifully constructed from large rocks, the whole feel is natural and the stream is complemented by inspired planting. The quality of construction impressed the judges and the client’s expectations were exceeded by the final result. Shrubs, perennials and water plants all add to the design and this is a garden that will mature well.

In contrast, their formal pond in The Educational Design Studio garden is a tranquil haven. A gentle trickle





of water aerates the pond and the edges are blurred with rocks and well chosen plants. Waterlilies provide platforms for insects and vertical marginal plants enhance the benefit to wildlife.

In the Biodiversity and Sustainability section, managing rainwater and reducing the need for clean water irrigation featured strongly.

J & S Scapes were approached by Edit Landscape Design to make a garden water sustainable in the Radnage project. Techniques used include grass paving in parking areas. Water runoff from the house is channelled into the pond and then overflows into a biodiverse bog garden area.

The Lunatica show garden by Joshua Fenton won Gold at Gardeners World Live in June 2024. Exploring how water runoff problems can be mitigated within our gardens, it is a series of interconnected solutions moving water through the garden from roof to ground level.



Plants and soil are used to slow and disperse rainwater. The bug store Corten steel bench provides habitat for wildlife and a stylish seating area.

*Photographs courtesy of the finalists.*

[www.rainegardendesign.co.uk](http://www.rainegardendesign.co.uk)

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# Seed purity secret to customer satisfaction

While there are no regulations on wildflower seed purity, as a producer and someone with pride in my job, I do the best I can to retain quality at every step of the process, writes **Klaas Broersma**, DLF wildflower seed production manager

It all starts with a good source. With the help and permission of local farmers, DLF has collected seed from long-established meadows and undisturbed sites to multiply for farm-scale production here at Inkerrow.

It takes a couple of years to ascertain how species will germinate, establish, compete with weeds, be effectively harvested and cleaned. From trials, we can take this knowledge and apply it to growing varieties on farm scale.

Seed is sown using a precision drill and GPS steering, which enables a follow-up run with a tractor mounted hoe to take out weeds between the rows. After a



(hopefully successful!) growing season, comes harvest – either done by hand on smaller crops or by small-scale combine. Designed to be self-cleaning, these combines help us to keep our fields and seed clean from mixing with previously harvested crops.

## Customised drying

From here, the material is dried in our customised drying system before beginning the cleaning process. The first step is the pre-clean – taking out the bulky material like sticks and chaff. Then seed is stored in boxes for fine cleaning in winter, with as many as 50 species in storage at one time. We have various cleaning machines to separate seed by size, weight, length and even shape. This critical stage ensures the customer achieves the results they want from their plants. Our seed is 99.8% pure.

Cleaned seed is bagged up and put into cold stores, where it enters dormancy to ensure optimum viability. When the cycle is complete, planning begins for the year ahead. Machinery maintenance is one of the biggest tasks, with thorough cleaning and servicing ensuring the kit is reliable and ready when the seed is due to harvest again. We're upgrading our box drying system to tune our own equipment to our own requirements.

Further preparation for the 2026 season is shown in our plug planting schedule. Since some wildflowers are slow to germinate or difficult to reliably establish, we start them in optimal conditions in our polytunnels. These varieties will stay there until they're ready for planting out in spring to give them a better chance to outcompete weeds and deliver a more reliable crop next year.





# Steps to ensure biosecurity

Eternal vigilance is the price of keeping invasive species and unwanted pests out of the UK and our planting schemes, writes **Peter Burks**

I write this as 2025 ends and what a good year it has been for the retail side of our industry.

The Garden Centre Association (GCA) Barometer of Trade is showing that on average our members garden centres have enjoyed an increase of more than 8% this year so far when compared to 2024.

Unfortunately, hard landscaping is one category that has not performed in line with the rest of the departments, as it is only just level with last year.

It is hard to know the reasons why but perhaps the very hot dry weather in summer deterred buyers from having a go at the heavy stuff. Generally, the garden construction retail areas are looking strong in our member centres and, to that end, I eagerly await the award at our upcoming conference at the end of January, sponsored by Meadowview Stone, for the best Garden Construction Department as judged by our four inspectors.

Garden centres will usually buy their plants from a range of nurseries, and countries, depending on the type and availability. How do you know these plants are 'clean' and not spreading unwanted issues around a newly landscaped area.

## Doubly biosecure

Fortunately, most wholesale nurseries in this country practise not only growing regimes that will reduce the chances of pest or disease taking hold but also introduce biological control predators. These work to keep the crop in good condition while on the nursery but also carry on their good work for a while once in their new location. Nurseries only want to produce good quality healthy plants of course.

Any plants imported must be inspected at the border before being allowed in. As I'm sure you are all aware, this has been causing issues in terms of timeliness and damage to consignments since these have been introduced and we are not sure they are really doing the job properly either. Any issues discovered here and the plants are destroyed.

This should mean plants for sale in garden centres will be free from any notifiable pest or disease and can be used with confidence.

Global trade in garden plants has risen rapidly in the last decade and is leading to increased movement of organisms from their native habitats to new regions across the world.

Imported plants and plant products, including wood,





Peter Burks, CEO of the Garden Centre Association, is a fully trained horticulturalist and has worked in directorial and senior management positions for garden centres nationwide for more than 40 years.

He ran garden centres with his parents until they retired. Three other family members also work in the sector.

Peter helped set up then ran the multi award-winning Sanders Garden World in Somerset for more than 10 years, being named GCA Garden Centre of the Year twice in that time.

He was southwest regional manager for Wyevalle Garden Centres, before becoming general manager for Trelawney's in Cornwall, and managing Fermoy's Garden Centre in Devon, part of the Blue Diamond group of garden centres.

wood packaging and dunnage (loose wood or matting used to keep a cargo in position in a ship's hold) are major pathways for the spread of harmful organisms. New threats to the health of plants and the environment are constantly emerging.

### Native plants

A native plant is one that originated or arrived naturally in a particular place without human involvement. In the British Isles, native plants are those that were here during the last ice age or have arrived unaided since. There are actually scarcely any truly native plants to the UK.

The word 'biosecurity' means policies, processes and practical measures used to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms, such as those that cause plant diseases (fungi, bacteria, viruses, aphids, mites and plant parasitic nematodes for example) and invasive plants.



### Robust policy

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) says all plant businesses should have a robust policy which is about minimising the risk of introducing and spreading unwanted pests, diseases and other invasive species to the UK, in order to protect our gardens and green spaces and existing plant populations.

Place an emphasis on assessing plant health risks associated with our activities in advance and take measures to mitigate them and balance risk with horticultural benefits.

We can see first-hand the issues of overplanting Buxus has caused with the spread of Box blight and the caterpillars of the Box tree moth. A balanced planting, of many different cultivars, is best for our natural wildlife and naturally protects the whole ecosystem from being decimated by a single pest or disease.

*Global trade in garden plants has risen rapidly in the last decade and is leading to increased movement of organisms from their native habitats to new regions across the world*

Invasive plants are those that grow vigorously, spread rapidly and can out-compete other plants. Native, non-native and cultivated plants can all be invasive, often without the introducer intending this to be the case. The right climatic conditions lead to previously unimagined issues.

These actions aren't just something for government to control. All professionals must engage in this and encourage the amateur gardeners to do the same. We all have a part to play in keeping our plants, gardens and landscapes healthy and protecting wildlife, businesses and livelihoods too.





# Designer finalists excel in surmounting challenges

A celebration of design excellence, innovation and creativity will highlight those shaping the future of the profession at the Society of Garden and Landscape Designers awards ceremony, to be held on Friday 6 February.

Three of the gardens nominated display the importance of great design combined with teamwork to overcome challenges, writes **Gillian Taylor**

## Old Quarry Garden.

*Designer: Fi Boyle MSGLD*

Sited in an old quarry, the project presented some unique difficulties. Access restrictions meant materials were moved in manually using wheelbarrows - and it took 18 months of hard labour for the landscaping and planting teams to achieve the final result.

Drystone walls, stones found on site and timber sleepers were used to create the terraces. Paths use strips of stone set into gravel for a natural feel.

The clients requested usable space close to the house, plus the transformation of the rocky slopes into a beautiful, accessible and biodiverse garden.

The Upper Garden by the house has a colour palette ranging from strong to pale pinks, through to blues and whites. As well as reliable perennials, Fi used Rosa Gertrude Jekyll and Rosa Olivia Austin to provide scent and form.

The Mediterranean Terrace carries a naturalistic feel

with planting into gravel and here, bright oranges and yellows mix with grey green leaves. The Melianthus Major plants look striking. The Lower Garden borders have a stronger vertical emphasis including iriirisaivia and anemones. Mexican fleabane (Erigeron) softens the edges of the walls.

Continuity is achieved by an impressive Corten steel water feature which sends water cascading down each level, plus the repetition of terracotta pots on each terrace.

"Landscape design is such a collaborative and creative field. To have my work recognised is incredibly special," Fi said.

[fi@fiboylegardendesign.com](mailto:fi@fiboylegardendesign.com)

Landscaper: Tristan Sutton Landscapes

Plant suppliers: Chichester Trees and Shrubs/Kingsdown/Griffin

Water feature, pots and water wall: Adezz



Gillian Taylor



Old Quarry Garden





Foxglove House

### **Foxglove House.**

**Designer: James Smith MSGLD**

The challenge here was to produce a landscape design that would satisfy the planners in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in which the resident deer would not eat the plants. The client wanted to keep the stunning views from the newly built Passivhaus and the key driver in the design was the transformation of pastureland into a biodiverse garden.

The client collaborated closely with James on the plant choices. Near the house a strong backbone is provided by a mixture of grasses (*Calamagrostis*, *Molinia*, *Hakonechloa*, *Stipa tenuissima*) alongside mixed flowering perennials that offer food for pollinators. These include *Verbena*, *Cirsium*, *Perovskia* and *Echinacea*. The central courtyard palette is restricted to green foliage and white flowers to achieve a calming ambience.

More distant areas include a wildflower meadow, wildlife pond and large areas of newly planted bulbs, including *Narcissi*, *Camassias* and *Alliums* – all of which have proved to be deer proof!

"We are over the moon to be shortlisted. It reinforces the hard work put into creating a landscape in harmony with a unique home," James said.

[james@james-smith-design.co.uk](mailto:james@james-smith-design.co.uk)

Landscaper (hard): APM Design and Build

Landscaper (soft) and ongoing maintenance: Andy Smith

Plant suppliers: Palmstead/Gedney Bulbs/Lincolnshire

Pond Plants

### **DDulwich Pollinators.**

**Designer: Barbara Samitier MSGLD**

The clients chose to refurbish their house after living there for more than 30 years and took this opportunity to revamp the garden.

The original layout was a large lawn flanked by perimeter borders, which backed on to a boundary of mature trees. The brief asked Barbara to provide a sophisticated garden with numerous entertaining spaces, planting that would enhance biodiversity and serve as a playground for their grandchildren. Over the course of two years this evolved into the immersive garden we see today.

The lawn area is now reduced by a third, shrubs add texture and the inspired planting provides year-round interest. Insect life has shelter and nectar in abundance, water does not feature due to safety considerations.

The layering of plants in the borders combining the weavers creeping thyme and *Cornus canadensis* with reliable fillers such as perennial geraniums and epimediums provides long-season foliage interest and movement. Shady areas are enhanced by a mixture of evergreen and deciduous ferns, one of the stars being *Dryopteris affinis*, *Cristata* the King. Underplanting with bulbs adds to the colour palette.

"It was a pleasure to work with and gain the trust of my clients. To be nominated for this award reflects on the whole team effort," Barbara said.

[info@moss-studio.co.uk](mailto:info@moss-studio.co.uk)

Landscaper: Inglorious Gardens

Plant supplier: Palmstead

Ongoing maintenance: Jonathan Gildersleeves

Corten steel/log stores: Parker and Coop Ltd

*All photographs courtesy of SGLD*

*Gillian Taylor is a horticultural speaker, writer, gardener and belongs to the Professional Gardeners Guild and Chartered Institute of Horticulture.*



DDulwich Pollinators

# Carbon balancing key in first biophilic primary school

Image credit: Tilbury Douglas Engineering



The UK's first purpose-built biophilic primary school features award-winning aspects that move into a higher realm of sustainability.

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy in Derby has won the 2025 RIBA East Midlands Award, the RIBA East Midlands Project Architect of the Year Award and the RIBA East Midlands Sustainability Award.

After a devastating fire destroyed the original school, a new multi-million-pound building has risen three years later to become reportedly the UK's greenest school. St Mary's is the country's first biophilic school and serves as a pilot scheme for the Department for Education.

Biophilic design connects people with nature to support physical and mental wellbeing.

With an ambition to operate at net zero carbon, balancing the carbon it produces with the carbon it

removes, St Mary's sets a new benchmark for sustainable educational facilities in the UK.

Landscape and grounds maintenance contractor Horizon Landscapes was awarded the tree planting and soft landscaping contract for this pilot project.

As part of the landscape strategy, 100 new trees were planted, many of which were semi-mature to help the school become quickly embedded in the biophilic landscape. Additional landscape features include rain gardens, season bulb planting, green roof and wildflower meadows to maximise biodiversity and support local ecology.

For planting in the hard landscaped areas, supplier Green-tech supplied 128 TreeParker units, 40 tonnes of Green-tree geosoil and 40 tonnes of Green-tree subsoil. The TreeParker cell system is an underground structural soil cell system that provides an ideal environment for trees to thrive beneath the pavement in urban environments.

The system provides large volumes of non-compact high-quality soil and maximises the usable space beneath the ground, providing unlimited expansion for unimpeded root growth, while supporting traffic loads at the same time.

It is suitable for new trees in areas such as pavements, car parks and green roofs. In addition to this key function,

**Project:** St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy

**Location:** Derby

**Main contractor:** Tilbury Douglas Engineering

**Landscape architect:** Ares Landscape Architects

**Landscape contractor:** Horizon Landscapes

**Product/services supplied:** Tree Parker, Green-tree soil, tree anchor systems





TreeParker aids stormwater management within the system, dealing with rainwater runoff at source, an effective SuDS solution.

Green-tech also supplied 85 tree anchor systems for the installation of trees into the soft landscaping scheme to provide essential anchoring and stability for newly planted trees. In most cases, the tree anchor is secured over the root ball, providing greater contact with the surface area of the root ball and, in turn improved root support.

"I am so delighted for the children, staff, parents and wider community as we begin the next chapter in the new St Mary's, the greenest school in the UK," said Amanda Greaves, executive headteacher.

"It has been an absolute privilege to be part of this incredible pathway project. The best thing about the new building is being able to see all of the outside areas from all of the buildings and everything is integrated. We have 100 trees, the trim trail and lots of benches and everything feels calm and relaxed. Everyone is just excited to be here."

Richard Hale, managing director of Horizon Landscapes, added: "This was a stunning project to work on. It was an honour to be involved in creating the first biophilic school and for the importance of the outside to be truly recognised as comparable with the inside of the building.

"The project has been a huge success and well-received.

We have worked with Green-tech for many years and as ever they supplied what we needed, when we needed it. They are our go-to for all soft landscaping materials."

[www.green-tech.co.uk](http://www.green-tech.co.uk)



Image credit: Tilbury Douglas Engineering



# Bobcat compacts target landscaping

Building on its success in North America, manufacturer Bobcat is bidding to rank within Europe's top-three grounds maintenance equipment and double growth in the global GME market by 2027.

The company is targeting landscaping, grounds maintenance, lifting and handling and snow removal applications.

Alongside its mowers, turf equipment and mini track and small articulated loaders, three compact tractor platforms are available – the 1000, 2000 and 4000 series – featuring nine models from 24 to 58 hp to meet European customer needs.



## Suit all sites

"The tractors are designed to increase productivity, versatility and reliability," Bobcat states, and "help to get the job done efficiently thanks to their robust construction, smooth operation, flexible configuration and full compatibility with a wide range of our attachments."

Each of the nine models varies in size and engine horsepower, with manual and hydrostatic transmissions available: 3-point hitch with telescopic or quick lower links and open canopies (ROPS) and cabs.

"They offer all-day comfort in the cleverly designed and generously appointed workspace," the company says, with air conditioning (cab models), suspended seat, adjustable steering wheel, linked pedal and intuitive ergonomic controls.

The nine models offer a variety of application solutions and can be equipped with front, mid and rear connections and power take-offs. Features include an independent PTO, auto-PTO; PTO Cruise, HST Cruise or Draft control "ensuring optimum productivity and uptime".

## Fuel efficiency

The Bob-Tach system is standard on all machines with front-end loader, enabling users to switch easily between different Bobcat attachments to carry out multiple jobs. "Fuel consumption is minimised with the Eco PTO feature, while the linked pedal ensures optimum driving performance from the efficient 3-cylinder engine," Bobcat explains.

Every Bobcat tractor model comes with 4-wheel drive as standard. "Customers can easily engage it whenever work demands – enjoying superior power and traction in even the toughest working conditions," the company states.

"Our philosophy will continue to be in place for all approved attachments, encompassing homologation, certification, engineering approval and Plug&Play for all rear, mid-mount or front attachments."

One-piece engine cover eases daily maintenance, while customers can access "one-stop-shop expert advice, timely service and parts availability for both machines and attachments" via the wide dealer network. Each tractor is backed by a 24-month, 2000-hour warranty.

[www.bobcat.com](http://www.bobcat.com)



# Grass Roots works smarter with Deere tech

For Lincolnshire contractor Ben Bierley, precision isn't just about appearance. It's the difference between profit and waste. His company, Grass Roots, maintains football pitches, cricket outfields and golf courses across the county - and every pass of the machine counts.

Earlier this year, Ben invested in a John Deere 4066R compact utility tractor equipped with the manufacturer's Precision Ag Essentials package. Together they've transformed how the four-person business operates, he reports.

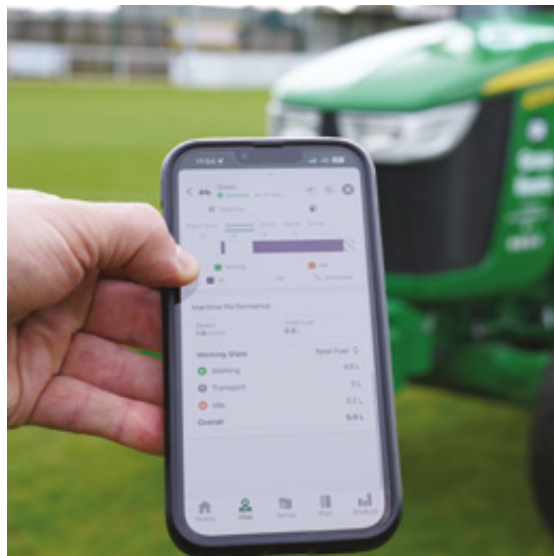
"It's not that you can't drive straight without GPS," says Ben. "But doing it for hours is tiring and even a tiny lapse can throw your lines out. AutoTrac takes that strain away, so every pass is perfect and I can focus on the implement."

The 4066R's 65 hp engine, high lift capacity and comfortable cab have made it the main workhorse in the Grass Roots fleet. From seeding and fertilising to Verti-Draining and spraying, it handles every implement. "It's the sweet spot," Ben says. "Powerful enough for heavy work but still compact and light on the turf."

Adding Precision Ag Essentials was the step that made the biggest difference. The package includes a G5 Plus display, StarFire 7500 receiver and a JDLink modem connecting to the John Deere Operations Center. It allows AutoTrac guidance for exact line-to-line accuracy and records every job for analysis later.

"For me, it's a way into precision tech without a huge upfront cost," Ben says. "You can see straight away how it helps: no overlap, no missed strips, and no wasted seed or fertiliser. Clients notice the finish instantly."

The benefits go beyond presentation. Using Operations Center data, Ben now tracks fuel burn and idle time for each job, helping him price work more accurately. "Before I'd estimate fuel costs. Now I know exactly what



a job uses," he says.

Operator fatigue has dropped too. "When you're on a tractor for ten hours, concentration fades. AutoTrac takes the mental load off so you finish fresher and sharper," he explains.

Ben plans to roll the system out across his smaller tractor next. "Once you've seen what the technology can do, you want it on everything. It makes us more efficient and keeps us competitive."

For a small firm, the combination of the 4066R and Precision Ag Essentials has delivered big results: lower costs, consistent work quality and a more professional finish. "It's saving money, saving fuel, and making the job easier," says Ben. "That's what matters most."



# NEC's show goes on with Kubota fleet

Operatives working across a UK major exhibition centre are enjoying comfort and convenience, thanks to a fleet of compact tractor units.

The fleet of 30 G261 units from Kubota's G-Series help keep waste and facilities services on track at The NEC Birmingham, delivered by Hunts Engineering earlier this year and well received by Darren Hawkins, head of soft services and a large team of OCS Group operatives across the NEC, Vox Conference Centre and BP Pulse Arena.

OCS Group have been responsible for cleaning, waste, cloakrooms, portering and the wider estates at the NEC Group's venues since 2012. Encompassing five venues in total, the need arose to replace the vehicles, which are pivotal to the maintenance operation at three of the campus's busiest sites.

"We narrowed our search down to two brands before speaking to Richard Lucas from Hunts Engineering who brought us a Kubota G261 on demonstration," explains Darren. "We really put the machine through its paces, determined to find the limits of its capability and quite quickly discovered it could deliver everything our previous machines could with . . . support from Richard and the team."

With a couple of additional bespoke features, such as amber safety beacons, to ensure the G261s were fully fit for purpose, the first delivery of 20 units was made in spring, joined in summer by an additional 10 vehicles.

"Their main task is to tow 1,280 bins to various points, collecting litter and other waste during event build-ups and breakdowns," Darren explains. "As the old saying goes 'the show must go on' whether we've got machines to collect the litter or not so reliability is critical for us."



The NEC Estates Team's positive feedback about the Kubota M5-092 it had been using spurred on Darren to look at smaller machines in the range.

Depending on the event calendar, 20 or more G261s can be working. "Training has made the transition relatively seamless, and hopefully means we'll be able to better protect our investment," he reports.

Moving forwards, in-house monitoring and routine maintenance and servicing by Hunts will ensure the venue can continue to depend on the performance of the G261s for years to come.

Steve Cartmell, NEC Group FM contract support manager added: "The team's choice of working with Hunts to provide Kubota machinery ensures OCS service provision across our site can continue with improved reliability, fuel efficiency and user safety features, making the operation from event to event seamless."

<https://www.kubota.com>







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# Jimmy's bears 'cuddle up' to Iseki foursome



Jimmy's Farm & Wildlife Park has turned to compacts to help care for animals and maintain Europe's largest polar bear reserve.

The Park has grown from a small attraction into one of Suffolk's most bespoke conservation sites, and Iseki tractors have aided the transformation, with a pair of TLE 3410s and two TXG S24s helping the team care for more than 100 animal species every day.

Over the last decade, park director Stevie Sheppard has overseen the site's remarkable evolution. Founded by Jimmy Doherty and inspired by his background in entomology, the park began with butterflies before expanding into a fully fledged wildlife park. Today, it's home to animals from all corners of the world, including rescued polar bears and brown bears.

"In 2023, we rescued a polar bear named Eva from Orsa Predator Park in Sweden after the site was forced to close," explains Stevie. "We built Europe's largest polar bear reserve to give her a new home and soon after raised funds to save a brown bear called Diego, who now lives happily here with his companion, Brunhilda."

## Local and reliable

Caring for animals on that scale also requires reliable equipment to handle heavy workloads in confined spaces. "We contacted Iseki because they're based on our doorstep in Ipswich," Stevie recalls. "We needed a tractor for the bears, something compact enough to move safely around the park but tough enough to transport hundreds of kilos of meat, fruit and veg."

Each machine has become a vital part of the workforce, handling various jobs across the 16-acre site, she adds.

"They cut the grass, move rocks and logs, tow bowsters to water the trees and even help bark up the playgrounds.

"When the maintenance team saw what they could do, they wanted one. Then the estates team wanted one. Now they're all over the park, from bear reserve to car park."

That daily workload comes with its share of knocks. "We've got bears trying to push bits around and the odd reindeer that wants to scratch up against them, so we do break them but the service from ISEKI UK & Ireland has been fantastic," says Stevie.

"They're simple to operate and simple to fix and if anything goes wrong, we call the team and they get us going again straight away. That kind of local support is priceless."





# BTME: “A week that shapes the turf industry”



Each January, Harrogate becomes the centre of the turf management world as BTME and Continue to Learn return to inspire and educate thousands of greenkeepers, grounds professionals and industry leaders.

From 18 to 22 January, greenkeepers member body BIGGA again delivers “Europe’s most comprehensive week of professional development, anchored by the BTME exhibition from 20 to 22 January, Europe’s premier showcase of turf innovation”.

BTME 2026 promises to be the biggest and most ambitious edition yet, the organiser predicts, with six bustling halls hosting the latest machinery, emerging technologies and practical solutions designed to meet the challenges of modern turfcare.

“For many, it’s the essential start to the season: a chance to compare products, plan investment and catch up with colleagues from across the UK and beyond,” BIGGA says. “Just as importantly, BTME remains the industry’s annual meeting point - a place to recharge, share challenges and celebrate the profession.”

## Continue to Learn

Running alongside, Continue to Learn offers what BIGGA says is the most comprehensive education programme in European turf management. From full-day technical classes to seminars and a two-day turf management conference, the programme covers agronomy, sustainability, irrigation, mechanics, leadership, wellbeing and more.

“Created in consultation with BIGGA members, every session is designed to deliver practical, immediately applicable knowledge. Whether you’re an experienced course manager or an apprentice starting out, there’s content tailored for every stage of your career.”

New for 2026 is the General Manager and Course Manager Symposium, delivered in partnership with the Golf Course Managers Association (GCMA). Over two days, leaders from both sides of club operations will tackle shared pressures including water resilience, workforce challenges, finance, communication and major event preparation. Another major highlight

is the Wednesday breakfast session featuring Rhett Evans, CEO of the GCSAA, who will share powerful lessons from his ascent of Mount Everest – “insights into perseverance, teamwork and leadership that resonate strongly with our industry”.

### The R&A Clubhouse

Visitors can also explore The R&A Clubhouse, where experts will dive into the issues shaping the future of golf course management. Meanwhile, excitement builds for the BIGGA Celebration, sponsored by Bernhard Academy and hosted by Sky Sports’ Sarah Stirk - a night where the BIGGA Awards honour excellence across the industry.

With registrations already tracking at record levels, BIGGA reports, and a special prize draw supported by robot mower manufacturer Kress for all who register, “BTME 2026 is set to be an unmissable week of learning, innovation and inspiration.

“For anyone committed to raising standards, advancing their skills and shaping the future of turf management, Harrogate in January is the place to be”.

### “We’re in a good place”

BIGGA chief executive Jim Croxton addresses key activities and issues across the sector.



BIGGA chief executive Jim Croxton



Sarah Stirk BIGGA Awards 2025



### What have been the highlights of BIGGA's year?

Numerous: BTME as always, just a brilliant start to the year, incredible numbers engaging with education, amazing award winners.

Launch and implementation of the R&A Championship Agronomy Programme gives ambitious greenkeepers the opportunity to engage with top level events from the inside. Our membership numbers have reached a modern high (about 6,500) which shows the progress we're making.

Partnership with GroundsFest was another highlight, along with the growing popularity of the First Green initiative to show greenkeeping to schoolchildren.

### What are your key challenges and missions in 2026?

We will be launching a new coherent greenkeeper education pathway that will allow our practitioners to plan their career and skills development much more efficiently and will be launching specific offerings to fill the gaps that have existed previously in the pathway.

Additionally, we are working really hard to ensure BIGGA membership is relevant to all greenkeepers at all stages in their careers and beyond so look out for a number of new offerings in our membership categories and benefits.

Our key challenge remains the employment market for our members. So many golf clubs are now excellent employers who value their staff, remunerate them appropriately and treat them with respect. However, the market is not homogenous. Golf clubs are at the mercy of changes in committees and management and too often we see our members treated badly. I am confident we are making progress in this area, with the support of the governing bodies of the sport, but there is still distance to cover.

### How are you addressing skills shortages in the sector - any standout successes?

We are significantly addressing the education sector for greenkeepers, looking at all roles within the industry and by late 2026 I anticipate there being credible education opportunities for practically all greenkeepers.

What do you hope are your best takeaways from BTME 2026 - more diverse visitor profile for example.

At the time of responding our Continue to Learn at BTME bookings are through the roof, nearly 20% ahead of this point last year, which was itself a record. So I think we can be confident of excellent visitor numbers.

The exhibition itself has grown from last year and is essentially full - a nice problem to have! Working with GroundsFest, we are looking to broaden our audience a little further in the landscape and sportsturf sectors.



We are also looking to encourage more women in the industry to attend and are hosting a specific event, BIGGA Elevates, on the Wednesday afternoon in association with the R&A and Syngenta, aimed at women in the golf and turf industries.

As always, our hope for BTME is that it is the absolute festival of greenkeeping we want it to be. It provides our membership and industry with an important shot in the arm right in the depths of winter.

Specifically, I'm particularly looking forward to our Celebration on the Tuesday evening when we mark the incredible achievements of our members through 2025 and discover the winners of the BIGGA Awards.

### **How is your partnership with GroundsFest progressing?**

Excellently. We learnt a lot from attending GroundsFest in September and now have some big plans for greenkeeper involvement in the 2026 edition. Similarly, we've been working closely with GroundsFest and GroundsFest Academy on offerings at BTME 2026 with a view to some major initiatives in 2027.

### **Are salary structures moving in the right direction - sufficient to retain skills base within the sector?**

In general, yes, they are moving in the right direction. They could probably move a little faster though! Salaries



have been increasing healthily across the board but there is a concern that because of the quite aggressive rises in the National Living Wage, structures are getting a little 'compressed' – that's to say not enough differential between brand-new, unskilled staff and those that have gained skills/qualifications and time served.

The Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) of which we are a part, is trying to address this with recommendations on structures and additional 'total package' benefits for skilled staff.





## BAGMA backs stronger business links

Re-engaging with dealers and industry partners on stand 642, the British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association (BAGMA) renews its commitment to partnerships, including launch of service providers Brown & Brown and VIN Chip Asset Security.



## Baroness unveils battery pedestrian mower

Sharing with Kubota on stand 624, Baroness displays its golf course mower and maintenance solutions. Debuting in the UK and Europe, the ELM56 lithium-battery prototype of its LM56 pedestrian mower, promises quiet, efficient running, while nickel-chrome-molybdenum cutting cylinders with hardened bedknives deliver “consistently professional quality of cut”.

## Kubota high-cut capability

Kubota partners with Baroness to showcase Japanese turf maintenance solutions on stand 624. Out-front mowing innovation focuses on the FC4-441, fitted with a deck offering up to 7 in cut height.



## Toro machinery and software newbies

Distributor Reesink Turfcare showcases cutting-edge tech and equipment to “streamline course management, improve efficiency and elevate course conditions”.

## GPS Raymo robots debut

Celebrating “a century of innovation”, Iseki displays the breadth and versatility of its machinery on distributor Iseki UK & Ireland's stand, 646.



The Raymo GPS robot mowers, with 48 in Craft Deck, 150Ah battery and accessories “exemplify the advantages of safe, zero-emission mowing, for areas where conventional equipment cannot operate efficiently”.

## Campey double celebration

Independent machinery supplier Campey Turf Care Systems marks its 40th anniversary in 2026, celebrating four decades of “pioneering advancements and dedicated service” in the sportsturf sector with a dedicated website: [www.campey40.com](http://www.campey40.com) and events throughout the year, including an anniversary open day on 9 July.

## Sustane introduces Zero-Phos fertilisers

Looking for early strength, reliable performance and long-term soil health? Find answers on Sustane's stand (170) with its new fertilisers.

## Consolidate marks milestone

Discover the results of Consolidate Turf Health Solutions' early spring data trials on stand 234 or on its new website, created to commemorate the company's 20 years in the sector.

## Fast, productive” aeration

The Deep Tine Aerator High Speed (DTA HS) range from GKB (stand 644) comes in three working widths, combining precision engineering with “significantly enhanced speed of operation, helping greens teams to achieve optimal soil decompaction while reducing disruption time”.

## Seeds and science

Improve your seed ID skills, explore new mixtures and be the first to learn about latest advances in seed technology on stand 124, courtesy of DLF Seeds, which aims to inspire and educate visitors with launch of the interactive DLF Seed Lab.



### DSV delivers new cultivars

PRO Pitch turf mix features on DSV Seeds' stand, 213. Cultivated to perform on winter sportspitches, it contains "the highest-ranking perennial ryegrass cultivar, offering exceptional wear tolerance, rapid recovery, and fast establishment".

### Spring renovation essentials

Those seeking to refresh their turf for spring with reliable, efficient renovation equipment have options on stand 532, where Redexim will display machines to tackle the key tasks of aeration, overseeding, decompaction and debris removal.

### Grinding out solutions

Hunter Grinders' professional solutions (stand 217) fit modern turf equipment workshops and are engineered to deliver "accuracy, consistency and repeatable results, supporting efficient servicing of cutting units to exact manufacturer standards".

### Proven turf performance from Sisis

Pro turf maintenance machinery to support consistent

playing conditions for golf courses and fine turf areas feature on the Sisis stand, 252.

### United front on smarter irrigation

Turf irrigation know-how unites on stand 550 as KAR UK and Hunter Irrigation team up to help visitors relieve the mounting pressure of water management and system efficiency to explore smarter, more sustainable irrigation solutions via Hunter's Pilot network control system and TTS-800 golf rotors.



### Tech at the sharp end

Visitors can inspect cylinder and bedknife grinders "to suit every club and budget" on stand 528, where Foley Company demonstrate how it's "redefining turf maintenance with practical, time-saving innovations". Premium sands

Explore selected sand-based products to "elevate the performance, longevity and overall health of sports surfaces" with Mansfield Sand (242).

### Kress Master stroke

Noted for its pioneering battery technology and robot mowers, Kress will unveil its Master Series units, "made to meet the demands of today's golf course management".

"Greenkeepers face increasing pressure to deliver consistently high playing surfaces while managing labour shortages, rising costs and sustainability objectives," Kress states, adding that the robot mowers have been developed to tackle such challenges.

"Intelligent navigation allows efficient operating across complex layouts, including fairways, surrounds and other managed turf, while continuous running supports long maintenance windows without increasing workload," the manufacturer adds.

Extended battery performance and a drive system handling varied terrain enable "consistent, repeatable mowing schedules that support healthier turf growth and uniform playing conditions," while quiet running reduces disruption to golfers and electric power sheds on-site emissions and lowers maintenance demands.





# GVA Training informs next gen on alkylate fuels

Contractor GVA strives to deliver on its 'your environment, our responsibility' pledge to clients that include National Highways, utility providers, countryside managers and land agencies in the UK.

Longtime users of Aspen 2 and Aspen 4 alkylate fuels for its machinery fleet, GVA has made them central to its new training school.

Already familiar with the firm after than 20 years in the arb sector, Andrew Fletcher joined GVA in September 2024 as corporate training instructor and co-ordinator with a vision to build a training centre reflecting best practice across the industry.

Soon, armed with awarding body Lantra qualifications to teach across 10 specialist disciplines, GVA Training has arisen. As Andrew explains: "Because of GVA's growth, we see a steady stream of new recruits so it made complete sense to develop a training model to run alongside our operations which supports our clients and demonstrates our commitment to continual professional development and high safety standards."

Courses are open to anyone and include a dedicated segment on fuelling – focused on the science, environmental and operator health benefits and practical advantages of Aspen Fuel over regular petrol.

"We see it in our day-to-day business – the reduction in smoke/haze, the lack of strong odour, the benefits it brings to engine life and equipment performance. It's now about informing the next generation, many of whom have heard about Aspen but some who only experience it hands-on for the first time when they come and learn with us. They notice the difference straight away," he adds.

"During the morning maintenance session, trainees get the chance to inspect machines from GVA's own fleet, which is where they can clearly see the fuel's cleaner burn and reduced carbon deposits. Come the afternoon, its outdoor training using both battery tools and conventional equipment fuelled exclusively with Aspen."

The blend of theory and practice helps overcome perceived barriers some attendees have, Andrew



believes. "Cost always comes up but when you factor in that Aspen is pre-mixed with 2-stroke oil, the reduction in machinery maintenance downtime and the health benefits, it pays for itself. We're fully converted which makes it easy to present with confidence."

With support from local Aspen distributor Stuart

Taylor's International, GVA Training has welcomed more than 100 students since the scheme launched in April 2025 and with demand rising steadily, the contractor expects numbers to grow rapidly in '26.

[www.aspenfuel.co.uk](http://www.aspenfuel.co.uk)



# Four decades of groundbreaking developments

From forks to finely tuned machinery, how a mechanical revolution transformed turfcare

For four decades, the name Redexim has been synonymous with pioneering machinery that has quite literally changed the ground beneath our feet.

From its Dutch origins to its global presence, the company has consistently pushed the boundaries of turf management, providing landscapers, groundstaff and greenkeepers with the tools to cultivate healthier, more resilient playing surfaces and green spaces.



## Genesis of a game-changer

Redexim's creation was driven by a need for efficiency and mechanisation in turf maintenance. The key driver stemmed from a simple, yet profound observation in the late 1970s: turf managers were laboriously using hand forks to aerate waterlogged football pitches. This inspired the idea for a mechanical solution.

That sparked development of Redexim's first product: the Verti-Drain. Launched in 1980, the deep-tine aerator was designed to decompact and aerate soil efficiently.

By driving tines deep down and employing an innovatory 'heave' or 'kicking' motion, the Verti-Drain shattered soil compaction, creating pathways for air, water and nutrients to reach grass roots.

The process dramatically improved drainage and fostered a healthier, more resilient turf structure, leaving minimal surface disturbance. The machine soon became globally recognised - its name synonymous with the process.



## Timeline of innovation

A philosophy of 'constant development' has steered the product line, extending beyond aeration to address every facet of professional turfcare. Innovation has arisen by responding to customer needs, market opportunities and evolving demands of turf health.

### • Early 1980s: Verti-Drain success

- **Innovation:** Introduction of multiple Verti-Drain models.
- **Driver:** To offer varying working widths and depths to suit applications from sensitive golf greens to large sportsfields and to accommodate various tractor horsepower.

### • 1990s: Expanding the natural turf portfolio



- **Innovation:** Development of overseeders and early topdressers.
- **Driver:** To complement the Verti-Drain by embracing a complete turf renovation and maintenance cycle. Overseeders provided precise seed placement to improve turf density, while topdressers enabled accurate material application, crucial for levelling and protecting playing surfaces.





• **Late 1990s/early 2000s: New aeration techniques and artificial turf**

- **Innovation:** Introduction of the Verti-Quake linear aerator and machinery for artificial turf care.
- **Driver:** The Verti-Quake was developed to provide deep aeration with virtually no surface disruption and suited to in-play use. Recognising the rapid growth of artificial turf, Redexim pioneered equipment for its decompaction, cleaning and infill maintenance.

• **2010s to present: Focus on precision and efficiency**

- **Innovation:** Launch of the Carrier (a self-propelled power plant for small implements), high-capacity Verti-Drain models (such as the 2519) and advanced topdressers.
- **Driver:** To increase productivity through high-output machines and improve precision via electronic controls for spreading rates and variable working depths. New generation machines such as the Top-Brush were developed to sort issues such as worm casts and surface moisture.

### Global reach and milestones

Redexim's dedication to quality has cultivated a vast user base worldwide across thousands of sites globally including premier sporting venues, championship golf courses, municipal parks and independent contractors, which all rely on its products for essential turf maintenance.

The Verti-Drain remains the company's flagship. Its presence worldwide and lengthy production confirm its status as one of the most widely adopted and trusted deep-tine aerators, selling tens of thousands of units over its 45-year history. Consistent evolution ensures its continued market prominence.



### Future turfcare challenges

The turfcare sector is facing unprecedented challenges, primarily driven by climate change. Extreme weather events, including intense, prolonged droughts and heavy, unpredictable rainfall, place significant stress on turf and soil. Redexim machinery is directly adapting to these demands in several key ways:

**1. Enhanced water management:** The core technology of the Verti-Drain and Verti-Quake improves soil structure and creates deeper channels, while the machinery enhances water infiltration during heavy rain (preventing waterlogging and anaerobic conditions) and boosts moisture retention deep within the rootzone during dry spells, increasing turf drought resilience.



**2. Focus on root health:** As climate stress rises, machinery promoting deeper, healthier root systems is vital as the best defence against environmental pressure and need for excessive irrigation.

**3. Precision and sustainability:** Modern Redexim equipment, like the electronically-controlled Rink topdressers and selective overseeding machines, allows operators to apply materials accurately. Such precision turf management minimises waste of costly materials such as sand and seed, supporting sustainable practices and reducing environmental impact.

**4. Hybrid turf solutions:** Redexim's machinery to maintain hybrid structures fosters consistent playability across diverse and challenging sites. Scarivator is an award-winning Product of the Year for good reason. Setting the standard in through-season precision renovation, it delivers results without disrupting play, combining scarification, aeration and surface renovation in one pass. Designed to help professionals maintain top performance year round, the machine reflects the company's commitment to smarter, sharper and more effective turfcare solutions.

In its fifth decade, Redexim maintains its foundational commitment: "To provide innovative, robust and reliable tools that empower turf professionals to overcome current and future site demands, ensuring healthy, playable surfaces, regardless of the environmental challenges they face."

# Keele campus switch to Makita XGTs “is a sound move”

Founded in 1949, Keele University in Staffordshire is one of the UK's largest campus universities with its 13,500 students and 2,000 staff utilising more than 250 teaching, research, sports and accommodation buildings that sit within more than 600 acres.

The university has its own low carbon energy generation park, with two wind turbines, 12,500 solar panels and a large battery storage unit. This supplies a remarkable 50% of the university's total annual energy needs. The estate, which dates back to the 12th century, includes extensive woodland, landscaped parkland, historic gardens, lakes, and sports fields.

The 10-strong grounds maintenance team works year-round to upkeep the impressive campus and in 2016, cordless power tools began replacing petrol powered and corded electric alternatives.

The Makita 40Vmax XGT tools selected are improving user safety and comfort, reducing noise and minimising environmental impact, with dedicated service and support.

“Our switch to cordless was driven by several

factors,” explained Neil Flavell, Keele's minor works project manager (building and external maintenance). The university is striving to minimise its environmental footprint, with the goal to be carbon neutral, so reducing use of fossil fuels in all areas is essential. With the university producing its own low carbon electricity, cordless tools were an obvious fit.”

## Less noise

John Knott, area grounds senior team leader, added: “Cordless tools also enable us to reduce noise around campus to avoid disturbing students' learning and exams. Importantly, it has also helped to improve team comfort and safety, with no fumes, lower vibration and elimination of the cords on electric tools that can be a trip hazard.”

The team began using cordless products from several manufacturers to evaluate which would be the long-term choice. The aim was to find the tools that could offer the best combination of performance, usability and ongoing manufacturer support.





The decision was eventually made to streamline the equipment pool to tools from just two manufacturers to provide a balance between offering a choice for the staff and reducing the complexity of operating many different battery platforms.

"The Makita tools have emerged as the preference among the team," John said: "They have found them easy and comfortable to use and crucially deliver the runtimes that allow them to work without having to worry about battery charging. On some of the tools, a single battery will often be all that is required to complete a day's tasks."

### Money well spent

Neil added: "With the team using these machines day after day, we need products that can meet the demands. We are always looking for a quality product and while cost is a consideration, we are happy to invest in tools that will last and do the job we need them to do."

"After sales service and support is also important to us, and this is a significant issue we have had with some manufacturers. In contrast, the support from Makita has been second to none with the team only too happy to help and they have been highly responsive to all our requests."

The tools the team operates include hedge trimmers, handheld blowers, backpack blowers, brush cutters and mowers, and it has also invested in the UXUX01 multi-function power head, which has a range of interchangeable attachments from hedge trimmers to powered roller brushes. All tools are part of Makita's 40Vmax XGT range, engineered to deliver the performance and runtimes professionals require.



### Hedge trimmer stands out

Commenting on what they see as one of the most valuable of the new Makita tools, John said: "The machine that has really impressed us is the UH007G 750mm hedge trimmer. It is powerful and has demonstrated excellent runtimes. The feedback from the team is that after the job is done, the battery often still has enough power to be swapped over to the blower to help clear up the trimmings."

Keele University was also able to take advantage of the Makita redemption schemes through which customers can claim additional batteries for free when they purchase selected tools, saving the university significant money when expanding its portfolio of tools.

And the new tools are also being utilised by the wider team at Keele, with building maintenance staff using a range of handheld power tools. The sports centre staff have even invested in their own UX01G with roller sweeper attachment for raking the beach volleyball court.

"The Makita tools have proven to be high quality and easy to use, backed up by their popularity among the team," John concluded. "However, it is really the whole package, including the service and support, we have received that has convinced us to invest further in expanding the number and variety of its machines we operate."

[www.makitauk.com](http://www.makitauk.com)

## Handy two-piece combo kit “lightens load”

The DLX2537ST 18V LXT Brushless Combo Kit from power tool maker Makita includes a DHP490 combi drill, a DTD153 impact driver and two BLI850B 5.0Ah LXT batteries and a DCI8SD battery charger - all packed in the 821551-8 Makpac Type 3 carry case.

Efficient motor and lightweight design combine to optimise operator comfort, Makita says - the combi drill “blending power and practicality”.

Weighing 1.7 kg with a battery, the drill’s compact design “reduces fatigue and aids manoeuvrability”, its 65 Nm maximum torque, two mechanical speeds and variable speed controlled through the trigger, offering professionals “a great all-round solution”.

The DTD153 impact driver also balances power output and user comfort. With a maximum fastening torque of 170 Nm, it provides ample power for driving screws and fixings into a range of different materials. Its rubberised, ergonomic grip and 1.6 kg weight with battery helps ensure it’s comfortable and easy to hold for extended periods.

Both tools also utilise Makita’s brushless motor to reduce need for maintenance and help extend life. The drill and impact driver are compatible with the BLI850B



5.0Ah batteries, which feature a handy charge indicator display and can be used with any of Makita’s LXT line-up of more than 300 tools.

[www.makita.co.uk](http://www.makita.co.uk)

## Stihl’s most powerful battery models

Pro landscapers are warming to the HSA 140 R and HSA 140 T, most powerful battery hedge trimmers in the Stihl’s AP System, with performance on a par with its petrol HS 82.

The ‘140 R’ weighs just 4.3 – 4.6 kg (without battery), is quiet and comfortable to hold, balanced in operation and features rotating rear handle that locks into three positions across a 180-degree range to reduce wrist strain when working for extended periods on the same side of a hedge in

a setting free of petrol fumes.

With 38 mm tooth spacing, it best suits annual pruning or hedge reduction work, Stihl says. Lower maximum 3,200 RPM also allows thicker branch material to enter the cutters efficiently.

The ‘140 T’ has higher maximum RPM and smaller 30 mm tooth spacing, to better suit ornamental or fine leaf hedges requiring fine finish.

The ‘140’ two-step planetary gearbox deliver high cutting performance and fast cold start-up and improved protection of internal components, while the anti-blocking system reverses the motor’s rotational direction to unblock blades.

When used with the recommended AP 200 S battery, maximum work time is 150 minutes for the ‘140 R’ and up to 140 minutes for the ‘140 T’.

### First single-sided battery trimmers

Single-sided hedge trimmers offer numerous benefits, including a longer, lighter cutting bar and improved safety. Designed for professional landscapers, the HSA 150 R and HSA 150 T are the first single-sided hedge trimmers in Stihl’s AP System, comparable in performance to the petrol HS 87 and come in 75 cm or 100 cm lengths with catcher plate as standard.

The ‘R’ and ‘T’ run for up to 150 and 140 minutes respectively minutes when used with the recommended AP 200 S battery.

[www.stihl.co.uk](http://www.stihl.co.uk)







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5.0Ah x4  
**5 hrs 50 mins**  
8.0Ah x4  
**9 hrs 20 mins**



# Students tool up with Echo while training

Chainsaw and machinery trainer LBS Training and Assessing has become an affiliated training centre for Echo Tools.

It will use Echo equipment in its courses, FGM Claymore, the manufacturer's official UK distributor, said, "providing students with the chance to learn using industry-leading tools that are trusted by professionals worldwide".

The partnership "reflects Echo's continued investment in the UK market and our commitment to



**ECHO**



equipping users with top-tier tools as they train for work in the industry,"

said Paul

Butterly, FGM Claymore managing director.

LBS Training & Assessing director Lee Kimber said he was delighted to support a brand that shared its focus on professionalism, safety and high standards "As Echo tools continue to grow in UK popularity, we

are pleased to give our students the opportunity to experience these tools as part of their training before using them in the workplace."

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# A century *at the cutting edge*



A hundred years ago, Andreas Stihl invented the first portable chainsaw, which revolutionised the landscaping industry. What's more, this breakthrough would rapidly transform how landscapers shaped outdoor spaces for years to come. From pruning to felling, processing and clearing, the chainsaw is now an indispensable tool for professionals in this space.

Now, as Stihl marks 100 years of innovation, the chainsaw continues to evolve, many powered by cutting-edge battery technology. For today's landscaping professionals, this means quiet operation, lower emissions and reduced maintenance, with the same level of performance promised by petrol machines.

Stihl specialists continue to drive industry-leading engineering excellence to this day, delivering ever-intuitive and efficient tools in line with the demands of landscapers. Here, as Stihl celebrates the tool that changed it all, we also look forward to a future built on a foundation of innovation.



Andreas  
Stihl

### 1920s: The first Stihl chainsaw

In 1926, the same year he founded the company, Andreas Stihl invented the first chainsaw powered by an electric motor, which was designed for cutting felled trees in log yards. He would go on to patent a petrol-operated design three years later, in 1929. Weighing 46 kg, the machine required two operators and was capable of felling trees.



### 1930s: The first portable chainsaw

In 1930, Stihl presented its first portable chainsaw at the Leipzig trade fair. Boasting a weight of 25kg, this one-person unit was added to the company's product range in 1933.



### 1940s: The War years

In 1943, the KS 43 'power chainsaw' is developed, made from a lightweight magnesium die-cast material.

### 1950s: Dawn of a new era

This decade would redefine the future of the chainsaw. The manufacturer developed both the BL and BLK chainsaws in the early 1950s. The BL was the first single-person petrol machine for both cutting and felling. The BLK would emerge just four years later, as "the first truly lightweight chainsaw solution".



Marking the dawn of a new era in forestry and landscaping, in 1959, Stihl's legendary Contra was born. The world's first gearless chainsaw, the design featured plenty of never-before-seen innovations, such as chain lubrication and sound suppressors.

### 1960s: Innovations underway

With a focus on creating an improved user experience, Stihl continued to innovate during the '60s. As a result, in 1964, it became the first manufacturer to equip its chainsaws with an anti-vibration handle.

### 1970s: Pioneering safety

Launching in 1972 and 1974 respectively, the 031 AV (EQ) and 041 AV chainsaws were the first on the market to feature electronic ignition and a chain brake, with QuickStop innovation bringing its saw chains to a standstill in a fraction of a second.

### 1980s: Environmental efficiencies

While the 024 set new benchmarks for performance and safety standards during this decade, the company's experts also prioritised environmental protection. The fruit of their efforts was the first catalytic converter for two-stroke engines. Fitted as standard to the 1989 044 C, the design reduced the emissions of hydrocarbons by 80%.

### 2000s: Transformative battery technology

The turn of the millennium saw a new chapter begin for the manufacturer, which led to rapid innovations in battery-operated machinery, including the first battery-powered chainsaw, the MSA I60 C B-Q.







### 2000 to today: The future is now

Stihl continues to shape the future of outdoor power equipment, engineering cutting-edge machines designed to meet the evolving needs of modern-day landscaping professionals.

In 2010 came the MS 261, succeeding the MS 260, which had long been seen as the world's best-selling professional chainsaw for forestry.

Come 2018 and the company launched the MS 500i, the world's first chainsaw with electronically controlled fuel injection, with economical fuel consumption and low emissions values now firmly at the fore of its innovations.

A year later, Stihl launched the battery-powered GTA 26 garden pruner, which is said to have proved to be a global success – lightweight and handy, the tool became a staple for every gardener.

To 2020, and four battery system ranges emerged, covering the spectrum of users, from home gardeners, to landscaping and forestry professionals. Now the company can supply a battery tool for every task.

As Stihl celebrates its centenary milestone, dual technology leadership remains at the heart of the company's approach. Battery-powered equipment continues to gain traction – and the manufacturer will provide and innovate scalable systems to enhance its growth.

For those with a strong preference for petrol machines however, it will continue to offer precision engineering in this space, as it has done over the past century. So, whether battery or petrol, the mission remains the same – “to empower professionals with the best tools to do the job, today, tomorrow and beyond”.



# Every drop counts



Drip irrigation confers a host of benefits for landscape schemes, write **Keith Coulsting** and **Art Elmers** of **Orbia Netafim USA**

Commercial and civic landscapes, from campuses and courtyards to city parks and hotel grounds, are expected to be beautiful, green, and safe.

Landscape operators successfully manage thousands of these grounds across the globe daily, but tightening water restrictions, ageing sprinkler systems and skills shortages means landscapers are being asked to do more with less.

One proven solution lies just beneath the surface - subsurface drip irrigation. Long used in agriculture to improve yields and crop health and maximise water use, the method is gaining traction in commercial and recreational settings. Today's modern drip systems are engineered to provide longevity, efficiency and ease of use in complex built environments.

## Designing for efficiency and beauty

Spray systems, especially pop-up sprinklers, are still the default in many landscape designs. Their issue is they can suffer from overspraying, pooling, wind drift and evaporation, all of which significantly reduce effectiveness and wastewater by up to 50 per cent. The system components are also vulnerable to wear, vandalism and foot traffic and are unsightly in an otherwise attractive setting.

Precision drip systems deliver water directly to the plant's rootzone. This reduces waste and helps operators direct water exactly where and when needed. Precision drip systems have been documented to reach up to 95% efficiency, a compelling factor for budgets.

## Benefits over misconceptions

Precision drip systems' benefits are well documented but misconceptions prevail. Some landscape architects might avoid them because they've heard they're difficult to maintain, prone to clogging, or cost-prohibitive.





Today's systems however are designed with internal check valves, pressure-compensating, continuous self-flushing emitters and copper-lined components that are engineered to resist root intrusion and clogging.

In fact, installations from the earliest years of commercial landscaping irrigation, four decades ago, still operate - proof these are long-term infrastructure tools. "People want to see irrigation happening so they know it's working," is another misconception. That kind of visibility leads to inefficiency. Subsurface systems eliminate visible spray heads, reducing tripping hazards and evaporation.

### Designing for control

Drip systems also offer more control to customize water schedules that fit the microclimate and terrain. Weather-responsive controllers, soil moisture sensors and zone-based scheduling make drip irrigation ideal for cycling and soaking.

That kind of flexibility is essential when dealing with varied plantings, elevation changes and uneven ground. When above-ground hardware is eliminated, designers reduce liability while creating cleaner, uninterrupted surfaces in plazas and turf areas.

### High-demand settings

Precision drip irrigation is showing its worth in some of the world's most visible places. In New York, Central Park Conservancy Gardens, the Liberty Bell grounds and the 9/11 Memorial treescape are examples.

These heavily trafficked public sites need reliable, durable systems of design integrity. Precision drip

is beneficial in complex planting configurations, as it preserves aesthetic goals while supporting plant health and long-term performance.

The scale of outdoor water use in civic and commercial properties is significant and under scrutiny, especially in arid regions. Studies show how office properties alone use between 34 and 129 gallons per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> a day. Multiply that across millions of acres of maintained landscape and the need for smarter irrigation becomes clear.

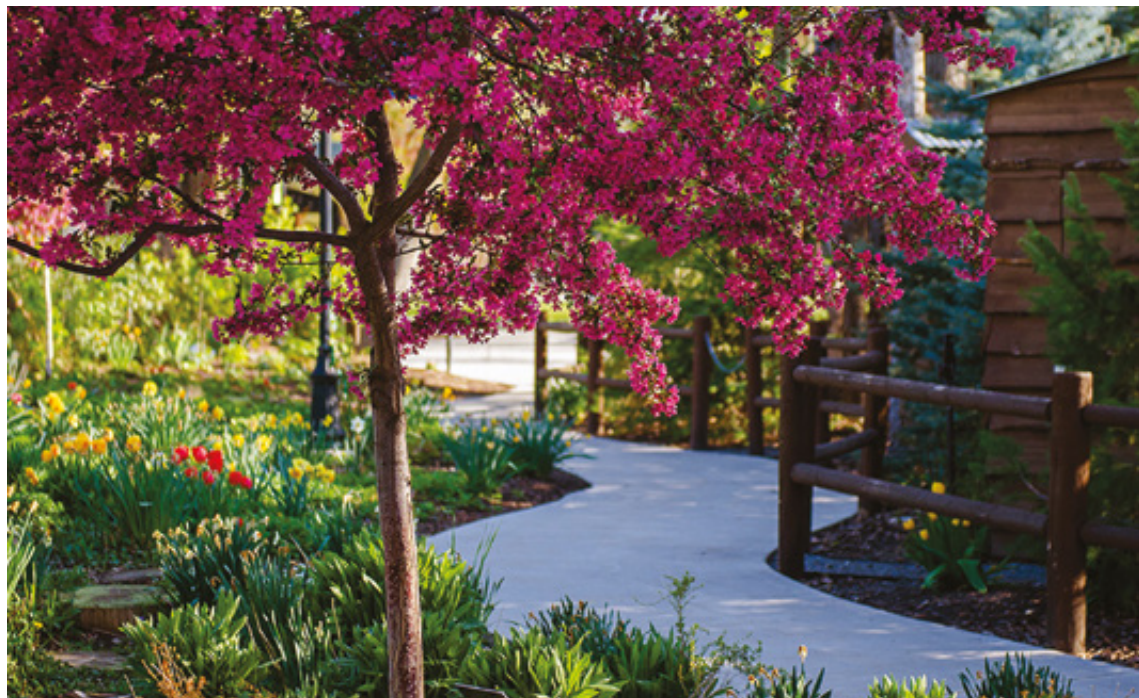
Designers can improve performance by focusing on a few core principles:

- **Group plants by water need.** Zoning avoids overwatering and improves uniformity
- **Include proper filtration.** Filtered systems last longer and require less maintenance
- **Updated technology.** Tools such as weather sensors and flow meters give operators more control and insight into water use

### From pilot to practice

Subsurface drip used to be seen as a niche or pilot solution. But it's now showing up in city parks, hospitals, college campuses, resort landscapes and commercial plazas. For clients focused on ESG metrics, LEED certification, or long-term cost savings, drip delivers on multiple fronts. Designing with water in mind and specifying systems that reflect the reality of today's water issues create more resilient and appealing landscapes.

*Orbia Netafim is a global leader in irrigation equipment, producing drippers, dripper lines, sprinklers and micro-emitters.*



# Contractors face juggling act to keep clients sweet

Outcome-led, flexible approaches focused on how spaces look, function and support people and nature is what clients expect now

“The grounds maintenance and estate management sector is facing increasing challenges, including skills shortages, rising costs, climate-driven changes to landscapes, greater sustainability expectations and a growing demand for transparency and accountability.”

So states Ryan Pembroke, recently appointed operations director of Majestic Grounds Maintenance, which through organic growth and acquisition offers its services across large swathes of Britain.

“We are actively addressing these challenges through in-house training, staff development and empowerment, strategic acquisitions and adopting new technology,” he adds.

Managing director Kenny Lawrence set up the business more than 30 years ago, running it as a family concern until a year ago, when he sold a controlling interest to Servtron. “It’s about forging lasting relationships,” Kenny explains, “and going above and beyond client expectations.”

Majestic handles grounds maintenance for housing estates, local authorities and business parks, with some parish council sportspitches thrown in. Hastoe Housing



Kenny Lawrence

Association was Kenny’s first client and the company still maintains its outdoor spaces. “I’m proud of that,” he states. “It shows customers can trust us.”

Among key sites Majestic manage is New Hall, Harlow, where some 1,600 front gardens have to be tended. “Six of our guys are there full time [32 staff comprise the current workforce],” says Kenny, who talks effusively about the excitement and challenges of the work the company undertakes.

## Build to rent rising

“Everything from revamping sites, tree replacement and water management, wild grass and wildflower plantings and reed clearances to installing and maintaining eight SuDS schemes in Whittlesea. We’ve just taken on an estate of 15 blocks in Barnet. It’s about growing the business while retaining the personal touch. The build to rent market is growing rapidly and developers are keeping their stock, which needs regular maintenance of outdoor space.”

Ryan resumes the story: “Our investment in people ensures our teams are skilled, confident and aligned with client expectations. Through targeted acquisitions, we are expanding our capabilities, enabling us to offer a wider range of complementary services and add greater depth to our overall service offering. This allows clients to work with a single, trusted partner across multiple disciplines.”

Estate and grounds managers “will increasingly require flexible, resilient partners who can adapt to environmental change, deliver measurable outcomes and provide clear evidence of value”, he continues. “Majestic supports this by delivering outcome-led maintenance programmes, enhanced digital reporting and proactive







guidance that helps clients manage risk, improve their outdoor spaces and plan effectively for the future.”

The scope of Majestic’s activities is evolving from traditional grounds maintenance into “a more integrated, outcome-led service that supports asset protection, sustainability, and client experience. Alongside core maintenance, we are increasingly delivering enhanced services such as biodiversity-led management, adaptive seasonal programmes and proactive site reporting”, Ryan explains.

New technology supports this evolution, he continues. “Digital field management systems are used to plan works, record site activity, capture photos and report issues in real time, to give clients greater visibility of service delivery and allow our teams to respond more quickly to changing site conditions and client needs. Overall, our focus is on using technology to improve consistency, transparency and long-term value for our clients while maintaining a flexible and responsive service.”

Majestic has strengthened its training and operational approach to ensure its teams are fully aligned with each client’s requirements. This includes delivering client- and site-specific inductions so operatives clearly understand local expectations, access arrangements and sensitivities.

“We have implemented digital reporting and communication training, enabling teams to log works, upload photos, and report issues in real time through our systems, improving transparency and responsiveness,” Ryan reports.

### Customer awareness training

Enhanced customer awareness training, focusing on professional conduct and effective interaction with residents and stakeholders, particularly on high-profile and public-facing sites has been introduced too. “Regular supervisor-led toolbox talks now incorporate client feedback, audit findings and site inspections, allowing continuous learning and improvement. All training is underpinned by up-to-date health and safety compliance, with RAMS, permit systems and site-specific risk controls aligned to each client’s standards.”

So in terms of managing outdoor space, how will the land lie over time? “The job is increasingly shifting from task-based maintenance to outcome-led, flexible approaches focused on how spaces look, function, and support people and nature,” Ryan states.

“More emphasis on biodiversity, sustainability and reduced chemical use is the trend, alongside greater acceptance of seasonal variation rather than overly manicured landscapes.

“Digital reporting and transparency are becoming standard, giving clients clearer visibility of works completed. Climate change is driving more adaptive maintenance planning, while rising expectations around professionalism, safety and customer interaction are shaping how teams operate on site. Overall, the move is towards long-term value, resilience and partnership rather than short-term cost savings.”

# Grass without borders: landscaping outside the garden

Landscapers can use synthetic turf for a wealth of different applications outside the realm of the traditional garden, discusses **Stefan Diderich**, director general/CEO of **EMEA Synthetic Turf Council (ESTC)**

Originally designed as a low-maintenance surface for sports and urban play, synthetic turf has come a long way since it first arrived on the market in the mid-1960s. Since then, advances in technology have brought this product to domestic gardens and beyond, with synthetic turf now able to be found in a range of settings outside of the garden, such as on roofs or balconies.

In many ways, these applications are where artificial surfaces can really add the most value for landscaping – not as an alternative to natural grass, but for specialised applications where the only other option is hard landscaping. Here are a handful of creative ways synthetic turf can be used:



## Branching out with fauxliage

As any landscaper who has ever tried their hand at topiary can attest, to call it a specialised skill would be an understatement. While simple shapes such as balls, boxes or cones can be perfected with a bit of practice, complex formations such as spirals and animals can take years to nail down. Some of the most commonly used plants, such as yew, can also grow back within a single season, making pruning and trimming an ongoing responsibility.

Here, synthetic turf can lend itself to the creation of similar structures without the need for years of training or ongoing maintenance. The desired shape is created using an internal frame or shell, typically made of steel, aluminum, or fiberglass and the turf is laid on top to provide the texture. This allows a range of handsome models to be created with relative ease – from elephants to bears.

## Grassy garden gazebos

In Britain, the humble pop-up gazebo has become almost synonymous with garden parties. However, even the most passionate gazebo advocate would be hard-pressed





to call them aesthetically pleasing. Enter synthetic turf.

Many of our members are using synthetic turf to transform temporary structures like gazebos from a pop-up eyesore into part of the garden itself. Following the same principle as the topiaries, the underlying structure is layered with synthetic turf, offering a green aesthetic that blends in with the wider environment.

#### Bringing the outside in

As we were all locked up in our homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, 'bringing the outside in' emerged as a major interior design trend, allowing homeowners to feel outdoors even when they weren't able to go out into it. While lockdown is gladly in the past, this design phenomenon is one that has stuck around – and for good reason.

Here, synthetic turf is being used to add greenery to indoor spaces without any of the mess. This includes playrooms and pet areas, offering a durable, safe surface for indoor activities, or for conservatories and home gyms, helping to create an indoor-meets-outdoor feel.

#### Balconies and beyond

Continuing in this vein, one of the most popular areas we see synthetic turf used outside of the garden is on balconies and terraces. While technically still an outdoor space, drainage, light and maintenance make installing natural grass in these areas a major challenge – not to mention the mess.

In this sense, synthetic turf is not replacing natural grass, but hard landscaping such as porcelain, decking, or

stone. Here, it offers the same green aesthetic of natural grass that complements potted plants, without any of the associated challenges.

Find out more at [www.estc.info](http://www.estc.info)



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