Green Sheet

RUPPERT LANDSCAPE NEWSLETTER

2ND QUARTER 2020

The Greensheet is our quarterly newsletter, which allows us to share general company information, including safety practices, profiles of our key jobs and community service initiatives, as well as personal achievements, including employee marriages, new babies, promotions and training certifications, in the hopes that it will provide unique insight into our company, our practices and most importantly, our people.

What Lies Ahead

By Craig Ruppert, CEO



e are certainly dealing with some challenging times right now with the uncertainty, unrest and discord that exists within our country. All of this, combined with a turbulent economy,

will make our path forward all the more difficult. We will continue to face changes in the way we work, live and interact with each other. As we begin the process of reengaging and heading back out into the world, I am grappling with the many unknowns, just as all of you are. But there is one thing I am certain of: challenges will arise, but each time one does, it presents us with an opportunity to learn, grow and expand in new ways. So while I am by no means holding myself up as the authority on how you should live your life or process the changes that are inevitably heading our way, I would like to share what I, personally, am focusing on as I reflect on the past few months and look toward the future...

■ We've already proven that we can adapt to changing times. In pretty short order, we have gotten comfortable with things like wearing masks, ordering groceries online and figuring out how to homeschool children. At work, we've adopted new safety protocols, gotten comfortable

- with working remotely and meeting virtually, and have come up with creative solutions for our team and our customers. We've demonstrated that as individuals—and collectively as a company—we're capable of absorbing a lot information from many different sources, pivoting quickly, and responding appropriately.
- By watching the pennies and being fiscally conservative, our company remains strong and well-positioned to weather turbulent economic times. Our goal has always been to ensure the long-term success of our company, enabling us to support all employees and their families now and in the future. Our more methodical approach to growth has been debated over the years. But for the exact situation we find ourselves in now, I am grateful that we didn't need to go the route of many of our competitors and those in other industries who had to respond to economic contractions with layoffs, reduction in hours and pay cuts. I am thankful to so many of you for helping us stay the course over these many years so that we are not in a position to need the government assistance that many businesses are seeking.
- In the are a lot of good people in this world who are willing to listen, share and help when things get tough. That has been abundantly clear to me throughout the COVID-19 crisis with so many Americans stepping up to help at



Our field crews have adapted to changing protocols including social distancing, wearing masks on site, and daily disinfecting.

foodbanks, honoring our front-line health care workers, sewing masks and converting manufacturing operations to provide much-needed supplies like hand sanitizer and ventilators. I've seen it in our industry with competitors operating as allies with their sharing of information and ideas, and within our organization as every one of you continued to show up and do your jobs even with the uncertainty that was before us. There was anxiety, differing opinions, and many discussions at all levels as we addressed the challenges that faced us. I saw constructive conversations,

Continued on page 3



Employee Engagement in Workplace Safety

By Dave Sanders, Director of Safety and Risk Management



omplacent employees may be unaware of the hazards around them. Engaged employees are fully invested in their work, their safety, and the company's success. They actively offer their suggestions and feedback, follow all safety rules, and actively participate in all safety processes and activities. Having engaged employees can improve our safety culture and performance.

which is especially important during critical times. The current COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of the need for every employee to understand the hazards they face, the steps they can take to mitigate that hazard, and then make every effort to ensure the job is done right so that everyone goes home without injury.

What is employee engagement?

Employee engagement refers to the level of involvement and commitment that employees have in their work processes and activities. Commitment is a willingness to devote time and energy to fulfill job responsibilities, including both intellectual and emotional energy in the workplace (SHRM). Committed employees take ownership of their job, go the extra mile and advocate for the company.

Why is employee engagement necessary for workplace safety?

Organizations and employees with high levels of engagement see fewer workplace accidents. In a Gallup Poll, the top 25 percent of workplaces with high employee engagement had 70 percent fewer incidents than those at the bottom 25 percent. Businesses with engaged workers are also more productive, have lower absenteeism, and lower turnover rates, which promotes employee morale, boosts overall business productivity, and enables us to provide reliable services to customers.

How can we increase employee engagement?

■ It starts with a shared culture in which everyone knows the company's values. Values are the defining factors that dictate how employees should behave. They provide meaning, context, and a sense of ownership in the company and its mission. Here at Ruppert, we



communicate the company's values often and live them every day. Our first value is our people and to be true to our first value, we must commit to another important one – the safety of our people.

- Encourage and solicit input and give praise.

 Employees who are at the front line have firsthand experience and knowledge on possible hazards and they can usually offer a solution. Listening and providing constructive feedback, recognition, and a thank you for a job done safely demonstrates to employees that their opinion matters and encourages further buy-in and engagement.
- Provide PPE, the tools and protections they need to do the job. Provide regular trainings to make sure everyone is properly trained to handle equipment, perform tasks, and to know what hazards to look for on jobs. Employees are the most integral part of our successful safety program.

Ways every employee can be involved in safety:

- Read, understand, and follow all company safety rules. Safety rules are in place for your protection. If you do not know the WHY behind the rule – Ask!
- Ask your supervisor for additional training if you feel you need it to operate safely. Consult the Ruppert Edge Binder, Field Manager Guide, or the Learning Management System where we have provided training videos for your learning.
- Before operating any new piece of equipment, read the operator safety manual and follow all manufacturer recommendations. Share what you've learned with crew members.

Continued on page 3

What Lies Ahead Continued from page 1

the melding of perspectives and proactive solutions that were executed with empathy, fairness and respect. It made me proud of our team, and I remain hopeful for our country, that we will be able to come together to face our changing social and economic landscape.

Reflecting on our core values and our connection to others can help sustain us in difficult times. You've likely heard the phrase "no man is an island," attributed to English poet John Donne. It speaks to our need for the interconnectedness of all people. I feel that times like these really underscore our need for communitywhether that be our families, our coworkers, our customers, our friends, or our broader society. Isolation can also leave us feeling adrift. By taking the time to refocus attention on our values, like fairness, inclusiveness, respect and giving back to others, we can hope to redirect our energy into the things that really matter.

What lies before us is certainly a unique and challenging time in our country's history, and we will undoubtedly face new and difficult situations. By



Members of our Richmond South maintenance team recently donated and delivered meals to local hospitals

remembering what we've already overcome and challenging ourselves to learn, evolve, and engage with others in open and honest dialogue, we will emerge stronger and with a greater capacity to move forward as individuals, as a company, and as a society.



Employee Engagement in Workplace Safety Continued from page 2

- If you see something that can be made safer, speak up. Don't be afraid to provide input; no one knows the job better than you.
- Report injuries, accidents, hazards, and near misses immediately. These are the things we learn from in order to prevent someone else from having the same thing happen. You might just save your coworker or another crew or branch from your experience.
- Participate in your weekly tailgate talk. Maybe even offer to lead the discussion.
- The morning stretch is a good place to offer input and maybe even volunteer to lead the stretch.
- Do you know how many days your branch is accident free? If not, find out.
- Look over the branch safety bulletin board for added information and to see where your branch stands on the incident charts.
- Volunteer to mentor a new crew member and train them on how to do their job safely. Always watch out for the person working next to you.



There are many other ways you can get involved and be a safety motivator to make us a more productive and efficient company. When everyone is engaged in safety, we are doing our part to reduce accidents and ensure we all go home safely to our families each day.

Proper Watering is the Key to Growth

By Ken Thompson, Director of Quality and Efficiency, Landscape Construction Division



e all know that trees and shrubs need water to survive and grow. But what's often overlooked is the delicate balance we need to strike so

that they grow at the right pace for sustainability and long-term health.

In the spring, both deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs go through a growth period called "tender leaf," a process of leaf growth and stem elongation. Plants having access to water during this time is crucial for the new shoots to be able to reach their full size potential in order to collect more sunlight, photosynthesize and produce food. These new leaves and stems are much more productive than older ones in terms of collecting light for the plant, which helps the root system grow as well. If plants do not get enough water in this time, it can result in smaller leaf development, shorter stems, or shorter "candles" on needled plants. Having smaller stems and shoots for the duration of summer and fall will inhibit plant growth above and below the ground.



Newly developed "candles" on a Pinus (white pine). These candles can grow up to a foot long and will eventually develop into a new stem, with the small green dots developing into green needles.





A Rosa (knockout rose) shrub and Taxus (dwarf yew) both exhibiting tender leaf (the lighter leaves/shoots).

Typically the spring months are full of rain, however, too much rain and fertilizer can actually over-produce new shoots and leaves to the point where the root system may not be able to support it through the summer. The key is to achieve a balance of the root to shoot ratio, shearing new shoots if necessary. This produces healthy plants which are able to ward off insects, diseases, molds and fungus.

Maintaining healthy plants is accomplished by closely monitoring the water/hydration in both irrigated

and non-irrigated landscapes. Even well-established plant material may suffer drought stress, caused either by excessive spring growth or poor leaf and stem development. These challenges increase exponentially when it comes to newly installed landscapes. In many cases, particularly with B&B plants (balled and burlapped), the root systems have been severely reduced during the digging process. Proper watering, which includes watering deeply and frequently, enables proper root development and fosters new growth for optimum health.

WATERING GUIDE

| QUANTITY | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Trees | | | | | | | | |
| Small | up to 2.0" or 10' | 10 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Medium | 2.5-4" or 12-16' | 20 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Large | 5.0-8.0" or 18-24' | 50 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Spaded | 9.0" or 25' plus | 100 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Shrubs | | | | | | | | |
| Small | up to 15" or 3G | 1 Gallon | | | | | | |
| Medium | 15-24" or 3-5G | 2 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Large | over 30" or 7G | 5 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Bedding Plants | | | | | | | | |
| All | per 1000 SF 625 Gall | | | | | | | |
| Sod | | | | | | | | |
| Initial | per 1000 SF | 625 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Follow-up | per 1000 SF | 250 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Seed | | | | | | | | |
| Initial | per 1000 SF | 0 SF 325 Gallons | | | | | | |
| Follow-up | per 1000 SF 325 Gallons | | | | | | | |
| Established Turf | | | | | | | | |
| Weekly | ekly per 1000 SF 625 Gallon | | | | | | | |

| FREQUENCY | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Trees/Shrubs/Plants | | | | | |
| Water immediately after planting-soak rootball and backfill | | | | | |
| Fill saucer, let it soak in, fill saucer gain | | | | | |
| First month - water every 7 days (5 days in summer) | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Sod | | | | | |
| Water immediately after installing - soak top 4" of soil | | | | | |
| First week - water every day | | | | | |
| Second week - water every other day | | | | | |
| Third week - water every 3 days | | | | | |
| Ongoing - water every week | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Seed | | | | | |
| Germination (1st 2 weeks) - water every day | | | | | |
| Until 2nd Mowing (1st month) - water every other day | | | | | |
| Until 4th mowing (2 nd month) - water every week | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Order of Operations

By Rachel Kelly, Director of Quality and Efficiency, Landscape Management Division



eople are creatures of habit. We find comfort in following the same routines because we are freed from making lots of small decisions and able to focus our mental energies on more important tasks.

Take my morning routine for example: When I am home, I wake up every morning, wash my face and brush my teeth. Then I make my bed, put on my Ruppert uniform, walk and feed the dog, grab breakfast and drive

to the branch. When I am on the road, this routine varies only in that I don't have to walk the dog and I rely on the closest Starbucks for breakfast. The overall process has certain steps that must happen: brush teeth (I hate morning breath), wash face, get dressed, drive to branch. There are steps that are dependent on where I am located: whether or not I care for the dog, what I eat for breakfast and the length of the drive to the branch. Whenever possible, I stay at the same hotel, in the same room and follow the same route to the branch. This means I don't have to think about where I am going to get breakfast or rely on GPS on my drive to the branch. This frees me up to think about how I am going to spend my day with the team. Following these routines provides structure to my day, enables me to focus on my job and ultimately, deliver better support to the branches.

The same thing happens when we follow routines in the field. In maintenance, when we think about how to produce work, we think about the **Order of Operations**:

Details First. This is our opportunity to ensure that customer priorities are not rushed at the end. It is important to know what is truly important to the





customer. Don't just assume! Details vary from property to property, but typically include:

- Weed control
- Pruning
- Floriculture maintenance
- Pre-blowing gutters (if necessary)
- Trash/debris removal
- Hard Edge. Be sure you know the contract and the frequency of edgings. The edger leads the way! There is one optimal way to edge the property. Once that is determined, all other tasks follow the flow of the edger. This keeps everyone going in the same direction, creating consistent flow and giving Field Managers increased control over the job.
- **Mow.** Keep the grass in the grass! Blowing time is greatly reduced when the mower chases the edger by returning debris back to the turf and keeping the chute towards the grass. It is most productive to send the larger mowers out first and have the smaller mowers follow and cut what the larger mowers can't reach. Make sure we have the correct mower size. Forcing a larger mower on a small turf panel is a recipe for safety, quality and productivity issues.
- Weedeat. Weedeating often increases safety risks, decreases the quality of the cut and is incredibly unproductive. Whenever possible, eliminate weedeating by modifying mulch beds, spraying out fence lines and ensuring we have the right size mowers on the turf.
- **Blow.** If we've been mulching pruning clippings whenever possible, edging before mowing and "keeping the grass in the grass," blowing should be a piece of cake!

While this exact list may not apply to our landscape construction division, the principles still apply. When the correct order of operations becomes a habit, we have a team that is flowing smoothly and firing on all cylinders, freeing up our best asset – our minds.

LMS Refresh

By Stephanie Whealton, Training Content Manager



n order to continue providing professional development and advancement opportunities for our people, we must always be taking steps to grow our

internal platforms. With a pause on inperson training due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our training department has been given a unique opportunity to focus on upgrading our company's Learning Management System (LMS), 'Ruppert Learns.'

The chief reason for this upgrade was that our platform vendor was acquired by a larger company, Absorb. This acquisition was a well-timed blessing, as we were encountering more

and more technical issues with our previous vendor, eLogic. Absorb has already proven that they have a robust support system, quickly mediating any technical problems we've encountered, as well as providing better customer service in general.

Along with better technical and customer service, the upgraded Ruppert Learns offers:

- Easier login by using existing Ruppert Email and Passwords
- Easier navigation
- A more user-friendly layout, designed to mimic 'Netflix-style' appearance
- A dedicated area for reference documents
- Expanded reporting capabilities

We've maintained our library of content from the previous site, including updated Ruppert EDGE documents, Operational Knowledge Assessments, and a slew of landscape maintenance modules.

Moving forward, it is our goal to review and update the content that we currently have, while expanding to develop landscape construction modules. The long-term goal of this system is to be a site that every employee can visit to learn more about their role and find tools that make it easier for them to get the job done. As of right now, all employees who have an active company email have access to Ruppert Learns. For login instructions or to report an issue, talk with your branch training rep or email training@ruppertcompanies.com.

Career Opportunities

For information about current career opportunities at Ruppert Landscape, please visit us at www. ruppertlandscape.com/careers



We're Growing!

uppert's landscape management division has added two new branch operations: one in Dagsboro, Delaware and another in West Grove, Pennsylvania. We are excited to be growing in these markets and to welcome new team members to our ranks!



Our **Delmarva maintenance (DEM)** branch is led by branch manager **Garth Jorgensen**. The facility and much of the team came to us through the acquisition of Scott & Sons Landscaping.



Our **West Grove maintenance (WGM)** branch is led by branch manager **Adam Doyle.** The facility and team joined us through an acquisition of select assets from Outside Unlimited.

Branch Abbreviations

| BAM CAM CHM CORP DCM DEM FBM FOM | Alexandria Maintenance (VA) Baltimore Maintenance (MD) Camp Hill Maintenance (PA) Charlotte Maintenance (NC) Corporate Office (MD) D.C. Maintenance (DC) Delmarva Maintenance (DE) Fredericksburg Maintenance (VA) Forestville Maintenance (MD) Frederick Maintenance (MD) | GAL GVM KIM LAM LIM MAM MDL NBL NCL | Georgia Landscape (GA) Gainesville Maintenance (VA) King of Prussia Maintenance (PA) Laytonsville Maintenance (MD) Lilburn Maintenance (GA) Mableton Maintenance (GA) Maryland Landscape (MD) National Landscape (MD) North Carolina Landscape (NC) | RAM REM RIM RSM TOM TXL VAL WGM WHM | Raleigh Maintenance (NC) Richmond East Maintenance (VA) Richmond Maintenance (VA) Richmond South Maintenance (VA) Toughkenamon Maintenance (PA) Texas Landscape (TX) Virginia Landscape (VA) West Grove Maintenance (PA) White Marsh Maintenance (MD) |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
|---|--|---|---|---|---|



Community Service

Wade Waller, Ben Belcher, David Sharry (RSM), and Regina **Brydges and Kevin** Hazelgrove (CORP-MAINT) recently delivered over 200 meals from Mission BBQ to the healthcare workers at Chippenham & Johnston-Willis Hospitals and Swift Creek ER in the Richmond area. We are honored to give this small token of appreciation to those serving on the front lines of the Coronavirus pandemic.



Joe Macko (TOM) represented Ruppert in the Jenner's Pond Earth Day volunteer parade, aimed at raising spirits and showing support for residents and employees of the retirement community. Jenner's Pond is a long-term customer of ours and we were proud to be involved in brightening these seniors' day.





On March 14th, our **North Carolina landscap**e branch assisted in a joint community service effort for The Miracle League of Johnston County, an organization that provides mentally and physically disabled children the opportunity to play baseball in a team setting. Through community support and donations, the organization has been able to build a new baseball field designated specifically for Miracle League players, along with a sensory playground on site. Branch members teamed up with a young man named Cooper Medlin and his Eagle Scout troop, who had raised money for three new flag poles in front of the field. Together with the troop, they created a new planting bed around the flag poles, relocated existing plant material, installed shrubs and grasses, and added a few yards of mulch. Well done, NCL team!





Movin' Sideways



Tyler Colvin moved from **ALM** to **GVM** as Area Mgr.



Jeff Sylvester (DCM) moved from Area Mgr. to Enhancement Mgr.



Rodney Waller moved from ALM to RIM as Mechanic.

NOT PICTURED

Keith Foernsler moved from MAM to LIM as Business Developer.





Major Milestones

A hearty congratulations and best wishes to:

PROUD PARENTS

Jack Hendrickson (WHM) and his wife, Kelly, welcomed a girl, Jade Marie, on April 26th.



Lily Novakova (CORP-ACCT) and her husband, Vlad, welcomed a boy, Daniel, on April 4th.



Farewell Friend



Our Ruppert team is like our family, which is why it's so hard to say goodbye when we lose one of our own. We are deeply saddened to share that Cecil Hopkins, shop manager in our DC maintenance branch who had been with the company for over 30 years, passed away unexpectedly in April due to diabetes-

related health complications. Over the course of his career, he worked in six branches, helping to ensure that our vehicles and equipment were working well, operating safely and living up to our Ruppert image standards. Cecil was very loyal to the company and its values and embodied what a strong work ethic looks like, but what he will be most remembered for was his friendly smile and his calm demeanor. He had a profound impact on his D.C. team and on so many in the company whose lives he touched over the years. His presence in our lives will be missed and our prayers go out to his family as they cope with his unexpected loss.



Movin' on Up



Joaquin Acosta (GVM) was promoted from Asst. Field Mgr. to Field Mgr.



Marvin Clermont (GAL) was promoted from Project Mgr. to Operations Mgr.



Salvador Magana (TOM) was promoted from Field Mgr. to Area Mgr.



Tim McCotter (GVM) was promoted from Irrigation Tech to Irrigation Production Mgr.



Diego Melendez-Sosa (**DCM)** was promoted from Asst. Field Mgr. to Field Mgr.



Michael Moody (DCM) has been promoted to Assoc. Branch Mgr.



John Parsley (GAL) was promoted from Asst. Project Mgr. to Asst. Production Mgr.



Austin Pounds (GVM) was promoted from Crew Member to Asst. Field Mgr.



Manuel Romero (TOM) was promoted from Crew Member to Field Mgr.



Amanda Timmins (CORP) was promoted from Payroll Specialist to Payroll & Benefits Supervisor.



Jack Wyatt (WHM) was promoted from Asst. Field Mgr. to Field Mgr.



Harold ZuBrinitz (WHM) was promoted from Field Mgr. to Area Mgr.

NOT PICTURED

Thomas Smith (GVM) was promoted from Crew Member to Asst. Field Mgr.

Jorge Villegas López (GVM) was promote from Asst. Field Mgr. to Field Mgr.



New Faces

We welcome the following new employees to Ruppert's growing ranks:



Alex Barday (DEM) Shop Manager



Ryan Bausch (LAM) Asst. Field Mgr.



Tyler Buchman (TOM) Asst. Field Mgr.



(GAL) Asst. Field Mgr.



Jim Cleveland (MAM) Business Devel.



Kennett Cotton (GAL) Asst. Field Mgr.



Brian Davidson (FOM) Lead Mechanic



Billy Davis (TOM) Field Manager



(WGM) Branch Manager



Nick Fanelli (LAM) Field Manager



Ronnie Few (GAL) Business Devel.



Jerome Golden (GAL) Asst. Field Mgr.



Caroline lanni (GVM) Area Manager



Stephen Lange (TOM) Asst. Field Mgr.



Zonia López Guerra (GVM)



Kat Lovell (GAL) Asst. Branch Admin. Asst. Project Mgr.



Andrew Lyons (GVM) Enhancement Mgr.



Alfredo Magana (TOM) Field Manager



Stephen St. Pierre (WHM) Enh. Field Mgr.



Monica Villela (DCM) Area Manager



Andrew Weeks (NCL) Asst. Project Mar.



Eric Wright (GVM) Field Manager



Will Yerkes (WGM) Shop Manager



Michael Zarlinga (DCM) Field Manager

NOT PICTURED

Emmanuel Vazquez (GAL) Field Manager

And welcome to our new and returning crew members!



What We're Grateful For

Giving Thanks to Front-Line Employees for their Dedication During the Pandemic



s our team members already know, we recently distributed bonus checks to 1,100 field-level employees totaling \$470,000 to thank them for their commitment and service during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we recognize that all employees were essential in keeping the business operating and our customers' projects and properties safe, this gesture was geared toward field managers and crew members whose risk profiles were highest as they continued to report to work during a time of great crisis and uncertainty. We are thankful to our entire team—those in the field, our offices and working from their homes—who have adapted to the myriad challenges that have come our way and enabled us to remain committed to our Ruppert Values of hard work, honoring obligations and supporting our community. We couldn't be more proud of our team and how you've rallied and responded.

Topping the Charts

Ve are proud to share that we have ranked #1 on the Washington Business Journal's list of the largest commercial landscaping companies in the greater DC region (for the fourth year in a row) and #7 on the Lawn & Landscape Top 100 list of landscape companies across the country (up from #8 in 2019). We want to thank our team members and valued clients for enabling us to continue to grow the business so that we can support our people and give back to our communities.



