

February 2024

# NHLA

# NEWSletter

Vol. 40 No. 2

Informing and educating members of the Green Industry

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## NHLA's Education Committee Has a Lot in Store for You

**N**HLA and its partners are planning some exciting programs for you, beginning on March 19 with a joint meeting of NHAA (NH Arborists Association), NHLA, and UNH Extension – a full-day of educational sessions, networking, and fun!

April 4-5 will find us, along with UNH and NH DES, on Lake Sunapee for this year's Landscaping for Water Quality program. And a week later we'll be partnering with Milton Cat to host our third annual Safety Day.

Looking toward autumn, plans for our NHLA Fall Field day are underway.

All of these programs offer outstanding educational opportunities, demonstrations, and time to share new ideas and build collaborations.

Join us at all four to make the most of your membership in NHLA. Please see pages 10-11 for more details. Also check out the *Newsletter* and the website for additional programs throughout the year. ↴

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The *NHHLA Newsletter* is published by the New Hampshire Landscape Association for its members, free of charge, 10 times a year.

**Memberships:**

See enclosed application or the website for a membership application.

**Additional Subscriptions:** Firms desiring additional subscriptions, can purchase them at \$40.00 each. Contact Pamela Moreau.

**Editorial Submissions and Advertising:** Articles and notices for publication should be sent to Carolyn Isaak, Editor. Advertisers wishing to appear in the *NHHLA Newsletter* should submit their ads to Annette Zamarchi. The editorial and advertising submissions schedule is online at [nhlaonline.org/nhla-newsletter](http://nhlaonline.org/nhla-newsletter).

The *NHHLA Newsletter* seeks to encourage a lively discussion of topics of concern to NHHLA members. Opinions and proposals presented in the newsletter are those of the writers to whom they are attributed and are not a statement of official policy by NHHLA, unless so stated.

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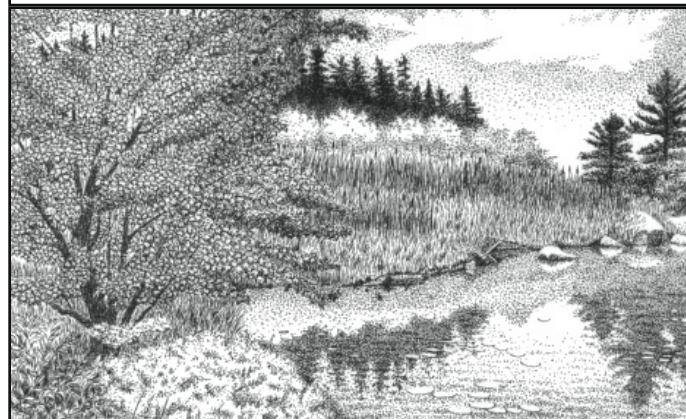
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**President's Notes**

by Andrew Pelkey

Winter finally showed up! Like most of you in the Green Industry, you are also involved in snow operations in the winter months. We are coming off our fourth service area-wide plowing event, and its already the end of January.

One of the areas NHHLA has yet to cover from an educational standpoint, at least during my involvement, is the snow side of our industry. I will bring this to the attention of our Board for further review!

In the spirit of getting the ball rolling, let's talk about both commercial and residential plowing services and their associated contracts for a moment.

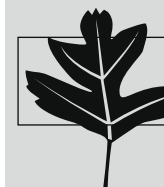
Not too long ago, I can remember seasons in which we would be on our fourteenth weather event! I won't spark a debate regarding global warming, but I will say, we must be prepared for different winters during different time periods.

Whether you are pricing and contracting commercial or residential work, you need to make sure your pricing reflects capturing your carry costs of equipment and general overhead. With varying weather cycles, you need to consider covering the cost of plowing

and de-icing services. On a year when average temps are on the warmer side (last 5) you will see a higher need for de-icing services with the freeze thaw. Or like we saw in 2015, 2016, 2017: 100"+ of snow. Clauses in your contracts such as inch caps, additional charges over caps, referred to as price ceilings, will help you mitigate the anomalies that occur outside of the average. With this said, pricing for average and covering the outliers is the goal. The snow can be a guessing game. But your pricing doesn't have to be.

Last month, we had a wonderful event with a few of the states industry titans to discuss growing and scaling your business, as part of NHHLA's two track program to provide education for owners and for team members. Check on the write-up in this *Newsletter* (page 14) for a recap of what was a fantastic night spent with over 70 of our members!

We are making moves on what will be our biggest year yet of educational offerings! The current Board of Directors is fired up and excited to bring as much value to you and your team as we can! 🐛



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# North Point Outdoors Pillar #8 of 10: Listen Generously

by Andrew Pelkey, NHLA President; COO, North Point Outdoors

In order for a team to function, they need to listen to each other. Coming in at #8 on the North Point Outdoors Pillars of Culture is “Listen Generously.”

Listening is more than simply “not speaking.” Be present and engaged. Quiet the noise in your head and let go of the need to agree or disagree. Create space for team members to express themselves without judgement. Listen with care and empathy. Above all, listen to understand.

As a leader, listening is essential and can be one of your most valued skill sets. As our Chief Operations Officer, I have

a team underneath me that brings tremendous value and input. Listening to them, understanding what they are bringing to me and using it to grow both as a company and individually is instrumental in moving forward.

The term “Active Listening” is defined as “to listen attentively to a speaker, understand what they are saying, respond and reflect on what’s being said, and retain the information for later.” Active listening is essential for clear communication. More so, actively listening with your teammates shows the highest level of respect.

In an era of distraction, showing intent to pay attention goes a long way. Keeping your phone in your pocket while in a meeting rather than on the table or making eye contact while the other person in speaking shows that you truly care about what they are saying and value their contributions. If you have been reading these Pillars all along, you probably have picked up on a common theme: each of them provides a path to finding mutual respect and easy collaboration with our team members.

Listen to understand, not to hear... 🌿

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## Be Active, or Get No Benefit

by Bill Gardocki

When I first joined NHLA back in the 1980s, I remember Alan Anderson telling me that you must be active to gain any benefit from being a member. The same thing can be said today! You can join NHLA, sit back and then ask why I am a member, or you can go to Twilight Meetings, Dinner Meetings, education events, and become an active participant in the Association.

Not everyone has to aspire to being in an elected position. Join a committee. Donate a few hours to man the NHLA booth at our Safety Day, Fall Field Day, or at the Northeast Hardscape Show. Host an event at your shop like Andrew has done at North Point Outdoors. There are more opportunities than you think.

Membership provides the opportunity to network with other landscapers, suppliers, and all types of industry related professionals. Our Education Committee is working hard to provide quality opportunities to provide information that you can use in your business. Bring along your key employees to help them grow. One argument against this I hear is that business owners don't want to help their future competitors. We all lose key employees at some point. Bring them if you want a well-rounded crew that feels part of your team, connected to the industry, and grateful for the opportunity to learn. They are our industry future business owners and members.

Through my involvement in NHLA over the years, I have



gained many valued friendships with people I trust and did business with. So please become active in our Association – come share and expand your knowledge, meet other industry leaders and

vendors, and grow personally and professionally. You won't regret it!  
*— Bill Gardocki is a past president of NHLA (1994 & 1995). He is now a hardscape educator.*



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## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

### Joint Spring Meeting of NHAA, NHLA & UNH Extension, March 19

The NH Arborists Association has invited NHLA and UNH Extension to join forces to offer a joint meeting providing a full day of educational sessions, networking, and fun. The NHAA's annual March meeting is expanding this year to include NHLA and topics of interest to both audiences. The NHLA Education Committee is excited to collaborate with NHAA to offer this opportunity to share expertise and experiences across disciplines. It is our hope that this joint event will bring members of both organizations together to forge new relationships, spark new ideas, and build collaborations that benefit businesses and individuals.

As an attendee, you will learn about the latest updates in tree pests and diseases, shoreland protection rules, ANSI standards, and OSHA regulations, and you will hear from tree care and landscape industry



colleagues on topics including construction planning and damage mitigation, right plant/right place, and integrated landscape design.

The Joint Spring Meeting

of NHAA, NHLA, & UNH Extension will be held at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, NH, March 19, 2024, 7am-4:30pm. Attendees and vendors can register at

[nhlaonline.org](http://nhlaonline.org).

Questions? Contact Amy Papineau, NHLA Education Committee Coordinator, [amy.papineau@unh.edu](mailto:amy.papineau@unh.edu), 603-560-6576

### 2024 Safety Day, April 10

NHLA is partnering with Milton Cat, Londonderry, NH to host the third annual NHLA Safety Day, April 10, 2024. The 2024 Safety Day will be a full day of hands-on interactive sessions with a focus on equipment safety. Demonstrations and activities will showcase safe use and

maintenance of both large and small mechanical equipment. Watch for details and registration at [nhlaonline.org](http://nhlaonline.org).

Questions: contact Amy Papineau, NHLA Education Committee Coordinator, [amy.papineau@unh.edu](mailto:amy.papineau@unh.edu), 603-560-6576



## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

### Landscaping for Water Quality, April 4-5

by Amy Papineau, UNH Extension Field Specialist, Landscape Horticulture

The decisions we make in landscape design and maintenance affect the water quality and health of New Hampshire's environment. Especially when working on waterfront properties, implementing practices that help prevent soil erosion, nutrient and pesticide runoff, exotic plant invasions, and other detrimental processes, can play a big part in protecting or enhancing the health of the local environment.

NHLA is teaming with UNH Extension and the NH Department of Environmental Services to host this year's Landscaping for Water Quality program. In this two-day event, landscapers, municipal staff, and others with an interest in protecting NH's waters, learn about the principles of designing and maintaining landscapes with a focus on protecting local water bodies. We encourage you to attend.

As a participant, you will



learn how to use ecological concepts and landscape features such as rain gardens, vegetative buffers, and other green infrastructure to protect lakes, rivers, streams, and bays. In addition to classroom sessions, we will get outside to visit a nearby waterfront property in

need of renovation. There, we will assess the site and work through the design process in small groups to re-design the landscape, incorporating practices and landscape features that reduce erosion and stormwater runoff and enhance ecological functions, like water filtration,

habitat formation, and nutrient cycling.

This year's workshop will be held April 4-5 at the Center for Lake Studies on Lake Sunapee, NH. Details and registration can be found at [www.des.nh.gov/event/2024-landscaping-water-quality-workshop](http://www.des.nh.gov/event/2024-landscaping-water-quality-workshop)

### NHLA Fall Field Day, September 18

Save the date! Building on the success of last year's event, we're returning to the Belknap County Fairgrounds this year for the 3rd NHLA Fall Field Day. Mark your calendars for September 18, 2024.



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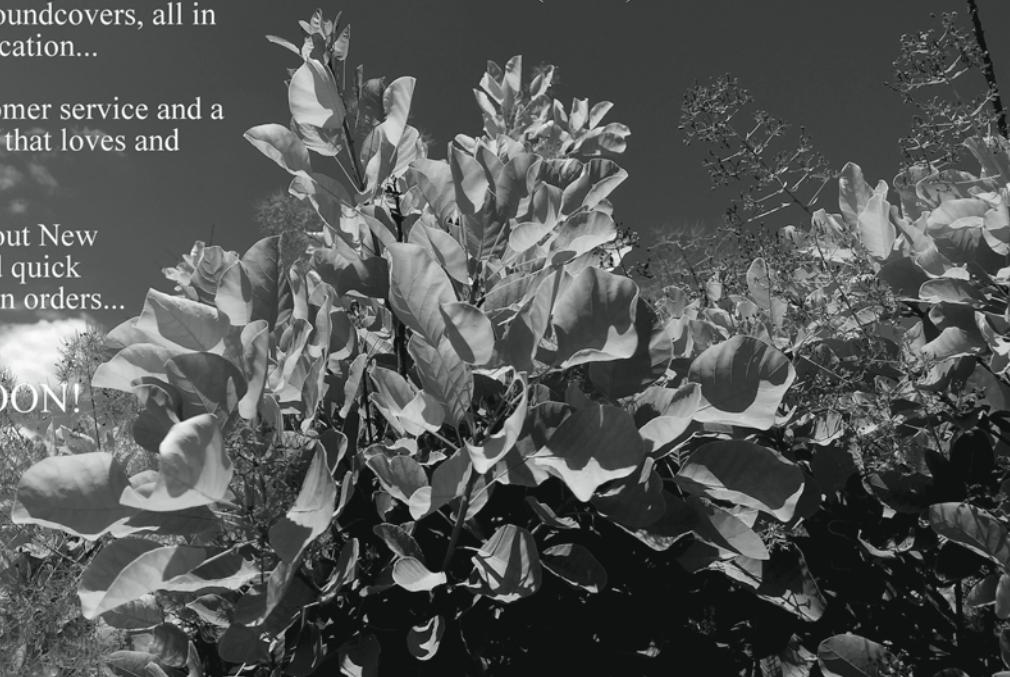
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## 2024 ELA Conference & Eco Marketplace!

Are you looking for innovative landscape solutions and inspiration? To learn, connect, and build relationships? Plan on participating in the 30th Annual ELA conference February 21-22, 2024. As a nod to the collective wisdom acquired over 30 years, the theme is Pearls of Wisdom. The virtual conference is a chance to engage and reflect on where the industry has been, hear about lessons learned, to prepare and adapt for the future, and to inspire each other to do all we can to build and maintain resilient landscapes that work in harmony with the life that supports them. Each day participants can choose between two tracks of presentations scheduled from 11:00 am-4:00 pm ET over Zoom.

In track one, Process: knowledge-sharing and story-telling, speakers will share strategies telling the story of our work and why the language we use matters. Speakers will discuss how knowledge and practices are shared across industries and cultures and challenge what we think we know about our work so that we can join together, embrace our differences, and share with everyone why this world is so wondrous and worth protecting.

In track two, Practice: How we act and adapt, speakers will share examples of ecological maintenance from large and wild to small and curated, offering strategies for climate change adaptation across scales of work.

All presentations will be recorded and made available to registrants after the conference. Info: go to: [ecolandscaping.org/](http://ecolandscaping.org/)

## Hands-On Sales, Design, Build Training Event

Take your business to the next level in 2024 by attending Outdoor Living Mastery, February 26 - March 1, 2024 in Morgantown, PA.

Mission: We will build multiple full-blown, high-end outdoor living spaces step by step in just five days!

This event was created for top level landscape, hardscape, and outdoor Living pros who want to provide the highest level of service to their clients, love to win, and are insanely passionate about mastering their craft. Individuals and teams are welcome.

Over the course of this event, 80+ contractors from all over the country will converge on the little town of Morgantown, PA, to learn how to take their landscaping / hardscaping businesses to the next level. This is NOT a "teach from the textbook" kind of event. Expect it to be intense, very hands-on and immersive. Alongside 80+ of your colleagues and experienced instructors, installers will build multiple outdoor living spaces and owners will learn how to sell more profitable projects, grow the business, become a marketing machine, and become downright dangerous in their market.

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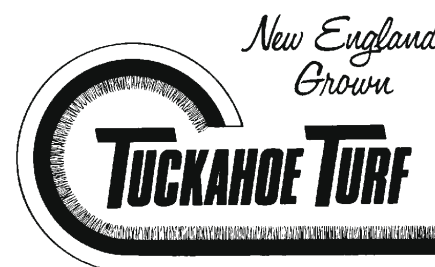
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# Follow your Passion, Seek Help, Pay Attention to the Bottom Line

by Mike Barwell, NHLA Education Chair

Three of the state's most successful landscape business leaders shared some of the secrets of their success with 65 attendees at the NHLA's first event of 2024 on January 17 at the Puritan Conference Center in Manchester.

The dinner was part of NHLA's series of education programs dedicated to helping business owners and managers improve operations and become more profitable.

Brandin Swisher of Alliance Landscaping, Mark Aquilino of Outdoor Pride, and John Stephens of Stephens Landscaping Professionals employ hundreds of seasonal and year-round workers, have hundreds of clients, and

Others spoke about the importance of seeking help and advice from others in the business, including some of the veteran landscapers attending that night....

have millions in annual revenues.

Swisher has a strong financial background. While attending the Whittemore School of Business at UNH he started Alliance as a one-man operation working out of his car, a 1985 Ford LTD with an attached snow mobile trailer. Alliance focuses primarily on contracted re-occurring services. In the summer they have 70-80 full-time employees and approxi-

mately 175 people during the winter months, including snow sub-contractors.

Outdoor Pride is one of the largest landscape and snow providers in New England. Aquilino has been a vital part of Outdoor Pride since 2006. Rising through the ranks, he now serves as president/CEO, overseeing all company operations, finance, sales/marketing, and most importantly

embracing a culture committed to a #one team mentality.

Under his leadership, the company has grown by nearly 290%, (\$6 million to \$24 million). He attributes the success to his team, which embraces a philosophy of people, planet, profits.

Nestled in the heart of the Lakes Region of New Hampshire, Stephens Landscaping Professionals has been transforming outdoor spaces into captivating works of art for the past 16 years.

"Our dedicated team of 85+ seasonal and year-round staff is committed to delivering unparalleled expertise in high-end design-build projects, year-round landscape maintenance, winter services, irrigation, lighting, and

personalized property management," Stephens said. "As we navigate the dynamic landscape of our industry, we face current challenges in working with environmental regulations, addressing the competitive employment market, securing specialized talents, and implementing effective training systems. Despite these challenges, our unwavering commitment to excellence and sustainable practices remains at the core of our mission."

Each of them talked about how they started and grew their businesses, their greatest challenges, the mistakes they mad, and who helped them along the way.

Swisher attributes his success to customer relationships, employee culture, and "our financial ability to adjust our pricing using an overhead recovery method. This has allowed us to maintain healthy margins and even increase margins in some sectors."

Swisher advised the group to "find your core values and surround yourself with others who share those values if you want to succeed."

All admitted the challenges of finding good workers in a tight labor market but emphasized that seeking out people who are service-oriented is the key.

"If I'm in Home Depot or Dunkin Donuts and come across



Above all, they agreed, follow your passion, set clear goals, have clear processes, and surround yourself with good people.

a worker who is all about helping me, I want them on my team," Swisher said. "I don't care if they aren't trained landscapers. I'll be happy to train them. I'll pay them more than they're making now because I like their attitude."

Others spoke about the importance of seeking help and advice from others in the business, including some of the veteran landscapers attending that night.

"I can't tell you how many times I called Bill Gardocki,"

one said. "He always answered my calls. As did so many others."

Above all, they agreed, follow your passion, set clear goals, have clear processes, and surround yourself with good people. 🦋

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## Certification Corner

by Abby Zuidema, NHCLP  
Certification Coordinator

### Registration for the March 2 NHCLP Exam is due by February 24!

New Hampshire Landscape Certified Professional (NHCLP) Exam

*Date:* Saturday March 2, 2024, 1-3 pm (written portion only)

*Location:* Millcan Nurseries

Advanced Registration Required. Applications must be received by February 24, 2024. For more information and to download the registration forms visit the NHLA website. Submit your application packet today!

#### Winter 2024 Manual Review Course continues:

All of the material in the NHCLP Exam comes directly from the Certification Manual, so taking the Manual Review Course is highly recommended. The course is also open to non-exam takers.

The Review Course is underway, offered remotely via Zoom, Tuesdays 6-8 pm. You may join in the remaining sessions. Topics are as follows:

- Jan. 30: Botany, Soils, Fertilizers, Composting
- Feb. 6: Plant Identification, Nomenclature, Hardiness, Native & Invasive Plants
- Feb. 13: Turf, Planting Instructions, Plant Maintenance, Safety
- Feb. 20: Landscape Design, Hardscape, Bidding and Estimating

Register at [nhlaonline.org/manual-review-course/](http://nhlaonline.org/manual-review-course/). Fee: \$35.00 per session or \$120 for 4 sessions.

Check out the website for more information and to register: [nhlaonline.org/how-to-become-certified/](http://nhlaonline.org/how-to-become-certified/). Contact: [NHLACert@gmail.com](mailto:NHLACert@gmail.com) with any questions.

#### Plant Identification Summer Course

This course consists of fourteen 3-hour sessions covering the basics of woody and herbaceous plant identification and identification of each of the plants on the NHCLP Plant Identification List.

The purpose is to teach plant materials to people who are new to the industry or people with little plant knowledge. The first class introduces students to methods of identification and plant families and the rest of the classes are spent identifying plant material. The NHCLP Plant Identification List covers a wide range of common plant materials used in the landscape industry.

The course is appropriate for anyone who wants to strengthen their plant material knowledge and is also designed to prepare people for the identification portion of the NHCLP Exam. It is open to both members of NHLA and non-members.

Over 250 woody and herbaceous plants will be reviewed in the course, roughly 18-20 plants per week. Quizzes will be held weekly to review the identification, common name, and scientific name of the plants covered. The Plant List is posted on the NHLA website at [nhlaonline.org/plan-id-sumer-course/](http://nhlaonline.org/plan-id-sumer-course/).



*Date and time:* Tuesdays, June 11-September 10, 5-8 pm

*Location:* NH nurseries, parks, and estates

*Fee:* \$525

Register by May 31, 2024. Check out the NHLA website for more information and registration: [nhlaonline.org/plant-id-summer-course/](http://nhlaonline.org/plant-id-summer-course/)

#### About the NHCLP Program

The NHCLP designation provides credibility that helps customers choose who to work with in an industry with a wide range of skills and competencies. An NHCLP must commit to continuing education to learn the latest industry developments, newest products, and best practices. They go the extra mile for their customers. ✨

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*Address Service Requested*

“There is always in February some one day, at least, when one smells the yet distant, but surely coming summer.”

— Gertrude Jekyll, British horticulturist and garden designer (1843-1932)

See the NHLA website for Newsletter copy and advertising deadlines:  
[nhlaonline.org/nhla-newsletter/](http://nhlaonline.org/nhla-newsletter/)



# Calendar

■ **FEBRUARY 21-22**

30th ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace, [ecolandscaping.org/](http://ecolandscaping.org/), see page 13

■ **FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 1**

Outdoor Living Mastery, see page 13

■ **MARCH 2**

NHCLP Exam, see page 19

■ **MARCH 5-7**

New England Regional Turfgrass Conference & Show, [nertf.org](http://nertf.org)

■ **MARCH 19**

NHAA, NHLA, UNH Extension Joint Meeting, see page 10

■ **MARCH 20-21**

2024 NE Hardscape Expo, see page 13

■ **APRIL 4-5**

Landscaping for Water Quality, see page 11

■ **APRIL 10**

NHLA Safety Day, see page 10