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NHLA

NEWSletter

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Informing and educating members of the Green Industry

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New
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January 22 Dinner Meeting: A Practical Approach to Organic Turf Care

Join us for the first NHLA event of 2025. At this Dinner Meeting, you will learn the principles of organic turf care through the lens of PJC's "Healthy Turf Circle."

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025

Location: Throwback Brewery, Jericho's Landing, 7 Hobbs Road,
North Hampton, NH 03862

Time: 5:30-8:00 pm

Register: Online at nhlaonline.org/events/

Diversify and increase your revenue with organic fertilization services. PJC Organic's "Practical Approach" has simplified turf care to help landscapers offer All-Natural Organic Turf Care (OTC) programs — it's not hard, just different!

Continued on page 18

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See enclosed application or the website for a membership application.

Additional Subscriptions: Firms desiring additional subscriptions, can purchase them at \$40.00 each. Contact Kathryn Sicard.

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The *NHLA Newsletter* seeks to encourage a lively discussion of topics of concern to NHLA 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 NHLA, unless so stated.

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President's Notes

by Andrew Pelkey

As we approach the end of another busy season, I want to take a moment to reflect on one of the most valuable aspects of our industry: the importance of networking. Whether you're just starting out in landscaping or have years of experience, building connections with your peers can be one of the most impactful ways to grow personally and professionally.

The landscape industry is constantly evolving, and no one has all the answers. That's why it's so important to engage with others in our field, to share ideas, challenges, and solutions. Networking with fellow professionals opens up opportunities for collaboration, new insights, and learning from each other's experiences. It also helps us build

strong relationships that can be a valuable source of support, advice, and camaraderie.

One of the best ways to connect with peers and foster these relationships is through our NHLA Dinner Meetings. We set viable topics and allow for discussion. These gatherings also provide an informal yet focused environment where we can engage with one another, exchange ideas, and learn from the diverse experiences of our fellow members. Whether you're discussing the latest landscaping trends, best business practices, or industry challenges, our Dinner Meetings offer the perfect platform for collaboration.

The true power of networking, however, lies in the relationships we build. There is no

The landscape industry is constantly evolving, and no one has all the answers. That's why it's so important to engage with others in our field, to share ideas, challenges, and solutions.

substitute for the connections made in person, whether it's a casual conversation over dinner or a shared experience at one of our events. These moments help create a sense of community within our industry, reminding us that we're all working toward the same goal — enhancing the beauty and sustainability of New Hampshire's landscapes.

I encourage all of you to take full advantage of these opportunities. If you haven't attended a Dinner Meeting yet, I strongly recommend that you join us at our next gathering. It's an opportunity to connect, learn, and

grow with a network of like-minded professionals who are just as dedicated to the industry as you are.

As we move into the colder months, I hope you'll continue to invest in these connections and remember that growth — both personal and professional — often comes from the relationships we nurture and the knowledge we share. Together, we can continue to strengthen our industry, support one another, and build a thriving landscape community in New Hampshire.

Looking forward to seeing you at our next Dinner Meeting.

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Certification Corner

by Abby Zuidema, NHCLP
Certification Coordinator

New NHCLP's

The New Hampshire Landscape Association Certification Committee is pleased to announce the achievements of four new NH Certified Landscape Professionals.

Congratulations to:
Katelyn Courtot #192
Wulff Traks LLC,
Dalton, NH

Katelyn has worked in the landscape and horticulture industry for 16 years (six years landscaping and 10 years merchandising). She has a master's degree in biology, and when she is not working as a wildlife biologist, she designs, installs and maintains perennial and vegetable gardens for private and commercial clients in northern New Hampshire. She combined her love of gardening with her wildlife and field experience to create her own company, Wulff Traks LLC: Wildlife Contracting and Horticultural Services.

Dianne Bedard #193
Spring Ledge Farm,
New London, NH

Dianne grew up helping a neighbor plant and harvest a home garden. This experience developed her passion in horticulture over 40 years! Today this passion has evolved into a second career, working at Spring Ledge Farm Nursery, helping customers select and maintain plants, trees, and shrubs for their own gardens. Participation in the NHLA Certification program has expanded her knowledge of gardening and landscaping plants.

Stephanie Cook #194
Belknap Landscaping,
Gilford, NH

Stephanie has been working in the plant industry for 8 years. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of New Hampshire. Stephanie is excited to have earned her NH



Landscape Professional Certification and looks forward to applying the knowledge gathered through the Certification programming in the field.

Jessica Mafera #195
Belknap Landscaping,
Gilford, NH

Jessica's love of plants started with a summer job at Chakarian Farms in Derry. She went on to earn her degree in horticulture from the Thompson School at UNH. After college, Jessica worked at Brochu Nurseries as well as the Parks Department at the Town of Derry. She now works in the Garden Services Division at Belknap Landscaping.

All NHCLPs must pass the Written and Plant ID portions of the NHCLP exam and earn 5 credits annually in Landscape and Industry Leadership programming. The Written exam is offered in March and September each year and the Plant ID portion in September only.

More information can be found at: nhlaonline.org/how-to-become-certified/

Questions: Contact certification@nhlaonline.org

Certification Exam 2025

The next Certification Exam will be held on Saturday, March 1, 2025. The written portion only will be offered on that date. The written portion of the exam is based on the NHCLP Manual.

A NHCLP Manual is included with exam registration or can be purchased separately. A Manual Review Course is offered prior to the exam (see below). More information can be found at nhlaonline.org. Contact: certification@nhlaonline.org

2025 NHCLP Manual Review Course

Date & Time: Tuesdays, January 28–February 18, 2025, 6-8 pm

Location: Zoom

Fee: \$35.00 per session or \$120 for 4 sessions.

Registration: see the NHLA website, nhlaonline.org

Schedule w—

January 28: Botany, Soils, Fertilizers, Composting

February 4: Plant Identification, Nomenclature & Hardiness, Native & Invasive Plants

February 11: Turf, Planting Instructions, Plant Maintenance, Safety

February 18: Landscape Design, Hardscape, Bidding and Estimating





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The Price of a Killer View

by Phil Caldwell

Some of you may have heard of the major pesticide violation that happened a couple of years ago, and is back in the news in Camden, ME, as more settlements start to happen. The news was all over national media. A family “from away,” that owns a summer house in Camden, decided they wanted a better view of the water. The \$3.5 million house has a nice view, but due to a few trees blocking some of the picture, I guess the owner wanted more removed to improve their view a bit. The residents are Amelia and Arthur Bond from St. Louis. She is the former CEO of the St. Louis Foundation, with more than \$500 million in assets in the non-profit foundation.

The large oak trees that were causing a slight obstruction of the Bond’s Camden harbor view were on the property of Lisa Gorman, Leon Gorman’s widow. Leon passed away a few years ago. He had been the CEO of L.L. Bean and was L.L.’s grandson. I occasionally used to see Leon Gorman walking his dogs here in Yarmouth. He lived here in Yarmouth (and Lisa still does) in a beautiful old Georgian colonial about a 8-10 houses from where we live. Obviously our duplex is on the other side of the tracks from Gormans, but they are not showy people, and Leon was always one to say hello when I spoke to him, despite being a bit shy.

As I mentioned, the oak trees were blocking the Bond’s view of the harbor, but helped serve as a screen for Lisa Gorman’s property. Bond had asked Lisa about removing the trees and

Lisa said no thanks, she liked the privacy screening. All of a sudden, all four oaks looked quite sickly and soon died, Lisa Bean had her tree care company take down the sick, defoliated trees and asked her arborists to have tests done to determine the cause for sudden defoliation and death. I think she may have suspected a suspicious death. Amelia Bond was so generous that she offered to split the costs of the tree removal! Bean’s tree care company sent samples to the state and labs found that Bond had spread Tebuthiuron on the ground around the oaks that were blocking her view. This is an herbicide, not sold in Maine, that she had purchased and transported from Missouri. By this time, the issue was in the hands of Lisa’s attorneys.

So, Amelia Bond now has a nicer view of the harbor, but the EPA considers Tebuthiuron an herbicide that does not break down in the soil. Most of the Bond property is on a hillside that drains into either Camden’s only public beach or a town park where the chemical in draining water will kill all plants on those properties. As a result the state is requiring all plants and the soil to be removed and trucked to a toxic waste dump about 70 miles away. Soil must be excavated down to ledge. I assume Amelia Bond will also be required to plant trees to replace the oaks that were killed on Lisa Bean’s property.

If you do some of the math it seems like a rather expensive method for improving your view: \$180,000 penalty for shoreline violation, \$30,000 environmen-

tal testing and monitoring, and \$4,500 unlawful application of herbicide. Not included in this price is the cost for disposal of toxic soil and replacement of soil and plants on the town beach and park areas, which will be quite costly. There was also a lawsuit at the start of this whole issue for something like \$1.5 million for Amelia Bond “removing” Lisa Bean’s trees. There are probably other costs I’ve overlooked or that have yet to be settled. This is a rough “guesstimate.”

I know Lisa Bean certainly wasn’t suing the Bonds for financial reasons, and for the most part I feel people have gotten way too “law suit happy” and

sue over the smallest things. I have, however, seen a significant increase in people “from away” coming to Maine (and I know the same is true in New Hampshire), avoiding setback and other regulations on lakes and the ocean. Many people think they’ll just do as they please — cut down trees or sometimes build docks — violating code and then just pay a \$20,000-\$30,000 fine for a better view or whatever. Finally towns are cracking down a bit more. In the case of the Bonds, several residents in Camden were not too happy, and I doubt they’ll be going to the yacht club very often in the future! 🌳🌳🌳

— Phil Caldwell is a past president of NHLA (1989) who now lives and works in Maine.



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How Software Can Grow Your Snow Business

by Rob DiFranco, adapted from *Landscapemanagement.net*, July 2024

For snow and ice contractors, effective software can unlock new money-making potential by saving time and increasing leads.

Joe Pascarella, chief operating officer at WorkWave and a former landscape business owner, shares how the right business software can carry your snow and ice business to the next level.

Communication is key

For Pascarella, the biggest advantage software offers a snow and ice contractor is the ability to communicate not only with employees, but with customers as well.

“The ability to send reminders and notifications and to communicate with the customer is such a big deal for any seasonal event,” he says. “Customers want to know, ‘Where’s my plow driver? What’s going on?’ It’s having the ability to communicate with the customer that makes software invaluable.”

Software can also push alerts and notifications directly to drivers about potential hazards on their route. Pascarella remembers the days of printing out MapQuest when planning out a snowplow’s route.

Now, with the help of AI al-

gorithms built into software, that is done automatically to maximize efficiency.

If there’s a traffic hold up or accident, the only way to know about it in the past was to listen to AM news radio in the truck. Now, if something does happen, the software can optimize a route based on dynamic conditions and say, “Hey, snowplow driver, go to this property first and then that property.”

Artificial Intelligence

Pascarella speaks excitedly about the potential of AI to expand what business software can offer the snow and ice contractor.

“The biggest benefit now is automation. It’s the ability to automate what humans would be doing and have it automated within the tools,” he says. “We are shifting more towards advanced AI machine learning within all those capabilities as well. That’s where we’re going to get creative, and the customers are going to ultimately reap the benefit.”

One area AI usage can expand is in a predictive way. His goal, he says, is to partner with IoT (Internet of Things) vendors to have sensors on snowplows to



be predictive in areas that can damage a contractor’s margin.

“When those trucks are moving around the parking lots, and they have a hydraulic line break, that puts that truck out of commission,” he says. “We’re going in a direction with smart IoT sensors where we can be predictive in that and other areas that destroy snowplow margin.”

Expanded Finances

Pascarella says that he’s seen an expanded acceptance of utilizing business software on the financial side of things since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

“What I started noticing is that more contractors have started to

accept Venmo or Cash App or offering financial tools to finance a project within their portfolio,” he says. “We have noticed, certainly from a financial acceptability lens, a night and day difference.”

In addition to the expanded offerings for payment collection and customer financing, Pascarella says he expects software companies to expand their financial capabilities in the future.

“It’s about helping our customers to do more with their customers,” says Pascarella. “We can be more of a lender, and in some cases, we go beyond that and explore solutions where our customers can help build credit in their businesses’ name.”





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February Dinner Meeting: Transform Your Frontline Operations with CrewHero Software

We're excited to introduce CrewHero at our February Dinner Meeting. It's a powerful software solution designed to streamline and enhance the operations of service-based businesses like yours!

Join us for a live demonstration and see how CrewHero will change the landscape game.

All are welcome! You do not need to be an NHLA member to attend. We encourage you to invite a friend who may not have attended an NHLA Dinner Meeting before.

Date: Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Location: The Puritan Conference Center, 245 Hooksett Rd., Manchester, NH

Time: 5:30-8:00 pm

Join us 5:30-6:00 pm for networking, appetizers, and a cash (credit card) bar. Speaker presentation begins at 6:00 pm, and buffet dinner begins at 7:00 pm.

Fee: \$60 per person, dinner included

Online Registration:
nhlaonline.org/events/

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between admin and frontline teams, allowing for faster decision-making. Built in business processes help support your team growth.

• Increased Productivity: Precise crew coordination and resource tracking keeps everyone on task and reduces downtime. Reduce non-billable labor every morning, getting your crews on the road and producing work faster than ever before.

• Mobile Flexibility: The MyCrewHero app keeps your team connected, ensuring they have the info they need to perform efficiently, communicate clearly, and the ability to manage your operation from anywhere.

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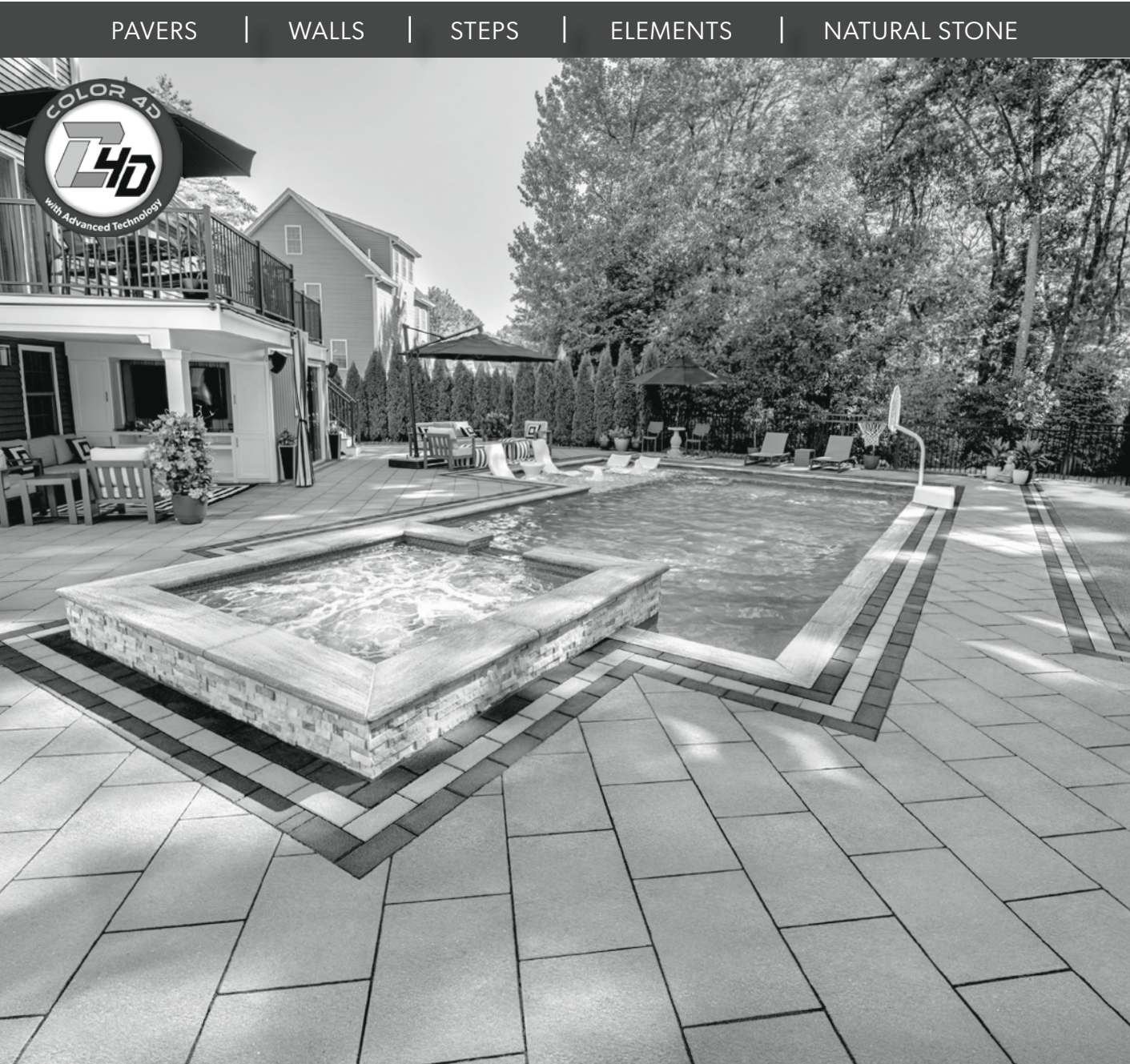
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Questions to Ask Yourself as an Owner of a Landscape Business

by Greg Herring, The Herring Group

I like to ask questions. Sometimes I ask questions of others, but often the most powerful ones are those I ask of myself. Asking myself questions does not mean I think I have all the answers; I do not. Asking questions helps me brainstorm. It expands my thinking. It forces me to be creative and consider many possibilities. It makes me better.

As we serve clients at The Herring Group, here are some questions we ponder as if we were owners of a landscape company. Perhaps these questions will expand your thinking. You may also want your team to brainstorm some answers.

What do we do (or what could we do) better than anyone else?

In business strategy, the answer to this question is called sustainable, competitive advantage. It represents a company's secret sauce for higher-than-average growth and profitability.

In the landscape industry, a competitive advantage typically would involve a process. Examples might include hiring, training, employee retention, production efficiency, routing, quality control, customer acquisition, and customer service.

Private equity firms are pouring money into the landscape industry. What opportunities do these firms see that I am not pursuing?

Some private equity firms probably believe that bigger landscape companies are more efficient. I disagree. If that were true, BrightView would either be highly profitable or have most of the revenue in their markets.



Perhaps these questions will expand your thinking. You may also want your team to brainstorm some answers.

Most private equity firms see an opportunity to increase management effectiveness by bringing an MBA approach to the landscape company. This approach would include enterprise-grade software, regular reports and key performance indicators in regular meetings, and higher levels of accountability for the results that drive customer satisfaction and profitability.

What competitive advantages do owner-operated companies have over private equity-funded companies?

There are many. Here are two. First, customers and employees can speak directly to the owner. Second, owners can make decisions and adapt to changing local circumstances and opportunities faster.

What am I doing (or not doing) that is creating a lid for the company's growth and improvement in profitability?

In The Herring Group 2022

Benchmark Report, 58 out of the 151 participating companies had an operating profit margin (operating income divided by revenue) of less than 4 percent; 31 of those companies lost money. It was a similar story in our 2021 Benchmark Report.

In our experience, most companies in this category perform consistently year to year. In other words, the systems that the company's management has in place produce the results. Those people and systems are a lid to improving profitability. Those companies need to do something differently if they want to improve profitability.

What will happen to our landscape company during the next downturn in the economy?

The last recession in the U.S. (other than COVID-19) occurred from December 2007 to June 2009 — about 16 years ago. Many of today's landscape companies were not even operating 16 years ago, which means many owners

and managers have no context of the impact of a recession on their businesses.

Landscape companies with low operating profit margins will have to change rapidly to survive a downturn. Alternatively, the owners may have to invest cash or sell the companies for a very low price.

High levels of profitability help companies in a downturn in two ways. First, during years of high profitability, companies increase cash balances and reduce debt or both. Second, higher levels of profitability mean that a company's revenue can decrease (typically in a recession) and the company can still be profitable.

How can I become a destination employer where people want to work here and grow their careers here?

Turnover is a cost buried in an income statement in the form of lost opportunity and inefficiency. You see the ad costs and the recruiter costs but not the value of the knowledge walking out the door.

Now that you've read my questions, what questions are you asking? 🦋

— This article originally appeared on [LandscapeManagement.net](#) on May 30, 2023. Greg Herring regularly writes for *Landscape Management*, providing financial analysis and insights tailored to landscape business owners. He has served as a CFO of both public and private companies and is founder of The Herring Group, financial leaders in the landscape industry. Read his blog at [herring-group.com](#).

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January Dinner Meeting, Continued from page 1



Pam Newcombe of PJC Organics will lead this discussion about soil testing and its influence on product selection, the importance of cultural practices, how to package an OTC program, and what a calendar for the season looks like. PJC has been in the organic turf care industry since 2002, so we know what works!

About PJC: PJC Organic is a manufacturer and distributor of organic turf care products that works with landscapers, schools and municipalities to tailor an organic fertilization program that is practical and fits your business.

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Please complete the information below:

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☐ Other _____
- ☐ Educator
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☐ Organic Landcare/Gardening
☐ Snow Management
☐ Turf
☐ Wholesale Grower
☐ Wholesale Supplier

Would you be willing to serve on an NHLA Committee?
☐ Yes ☐ No



MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY APPLYING FOR:

(Please check one.)

- ☐ **MEMBER (1 year):** Someone actively engaged in the landscape industry or allied professions or industries. **Annual Dues: \$175.00**
- ☐ **MEMBER (3 Years):** Someone actively engaged in the landscape industry or allied professions or industries. **Dues: \$475.00**

- ☐ **STUDENT MEMBER:** Full-time student of horticulture- related studies. **Annual Dues: \$40.00**

A renewal notice will be sent to you when your membership is near expiration.

I hereby apply for membership and I agree to abide by the By-Laws established by the New Hampshire Landscape Association.

SIGNATURE _____

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Please detach and return application to:
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“Go to the winter woods: listen there, look, watch, and ‘the dead month’ will give you a subtler secret than any you have yet found in the forest.”

— William Sharp, Scottish writer, (1855-1905)

See the NHLA website for Newsletter copy and advertising deadlines:
nhlaonline.org/nhla-newsletter/



Calendar

■ **JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 18**

NHCLP Manual Review Course, See page 5

■ **JANUARY 22**

NHLA Dinner Meeting, See page 1

■ **FEBRUARY 4**

Genest Bootcamp 2025, The Point Community Center, S. Portland, ME. See page. 17

■ **FEBRUARY 5**

Genest Bootcamp 2025, Regatta Conference Center, Eliot, ME. See page 17

■ **FEBRUARY 12**

NHLA Dinner Meeting, See page 11

■ **FEBRUARY 26-28**

2025 ELA Annual Conference & Eco Marketplace. This year's conference will remain virtual on days 1 & 2; on day 3, in-person member meetups will take place. ecolandscaping.org/event/ela-2025-annual-conference-eco-marketplace/

■ **MARCH 1**

NHCLP Exam, See page 5