

Pacific Landscape Management puts sustainability to work

By Susan Gordander

Lots of companies are jumping on the sustainability bandwagon, hoping riding the trend will transport them to new profits.

Pacific Landscape Management has taken a different approach. The Hillsboro-based company fully integrated sustainable practices into its own headquarters. Now when they offer earth-friendly products and practices to the commercial and industrial sites that make up their customer base, they have first-hand experience to cite about the benefits and cost-savings these innovations can bring.

On Friday, Pacific Landscape Maintenance held a Sustainability Fair and Open House for selected partners and representatives of other landscape companies, some of whom came from as far as New England for the event. A chartered bus brought visitors from the Professional Landcare Network, an international association known as PLANET, who were in the Northwest to attend a meeting at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Wash.

Bob Grover, who founded Pacific Landscape Management in 2000, said sustainability, to him, is "a collection of trying to do everything you do a little better." Recent changes in his company's practices had focused on four predominant, but divergent areas: landscape choices, irrigation efficient technology, solar energy and emission-reducing equipment.

Grover said Pacific Landscape had replaced their foundation shrubbery with a rain garden. They constructed a swale, watered by the



runoff now that they've disconnected their storm drains. They also are experimenting with a ecolawn mix, consisting of fescue, microclover and yarrow, which requires considerably less fertilizer and water than conventional lawns. A garden of drought-resistant plants fills a plot south of their parking lot.

Their sprinklers are run by a modular system available from Rainbird that transmits data on actual weather conditions including total rainfall and temperature variation to an off-site computer center. It then relays back the programming to control how much and how long the automatic watering system runs overnight.

Tanner Creek Energy installed solar panels on the building's roof. Grover said he expects these panels to generate up to 95 percent of his company's electricity requirements.

Pacific Landscape also upgraded to the latest mowers and other equip-

ment available from Stihl to not only reduce emissions but also conserve fuel.

Visitors at the open house could stop at displays highlighting these sustainability options as they strolled around the property and also visit booths where representatives of the partnering companies provided detailed information about their products and services.

Also on hand were representatives from SOLV, the City of Hillsboro, Clean Water Services and others with which Pacific Landscape Management has worked on community environmental support efforts.

Guests were also treated to a barbecue lunch, which also carried a sustainability lesson. The plates and utensils were all compostable, and bins were available for recycling everything from leftover food to drink cans.

"Our goal is this is a zero-waste event," Grover said.