

Oregon Business

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The 2020 100 Best Green Workplaces in Oregon

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GREEN RECOVERY

Reducing GHGs in a New Economic Reality

CLEAN FUELS

Stricter Standard Boosts Biodiesel, EVs

DIVERSIFYING HEMP

Cutting-Edge Research Boosts Sector

Leading the Sustainable Landscape Movement in Oregon

Historically, landscapes have mostly been a beautification tool for business and residential properties.

As the sustainable movement developed over the last two decades, landscapes have changed to not only beautify the urban environment, but to also help offset the negative impact of the manmade elements. Pacific Landscape Management has been a leader in the sustainable landscape movement here in Oregon. From their effort to maximize the environmental benefit of urban landscaping to the re-engineering of their operations to lower their environmental impact, Pacific has transformed their operations and helped transform landscape services within our region, helping them make one of *Oregon Business's* 100 Best Green Workplaces since its inception.

"We're trying to create the positive value that landscape brings to the urban world with less negative impacts by our operations while maintaining it," said Bob Grover, President and founder. "Our focus on sustainability started around 2007, following the release of Al Gore's book *An Inconvenient Truth*. "That really began the sustainable movement and we began to get questions from our customers about what we were doing as they began to develop sustainable goals."

Pacific is a commercial landscape management contractor and prior to 2007, rarely had a customer express any environmental concerns. When that changed, they quickly took action. "We took a hard look at our operations and challenged ourselves to make modifications everywhere we could to lower the environmental impact of our operations", said Grover. "We made a number of significant changes immediately, but continue to tweak our program every year. We have learned that sustainability is a mission, not a destination, as we can continue to improve."

Pacific adopted integrated pest management and evaluated the chemicals they used to only use those with least toxicity. They changed the fertilization program to include organic components. They have continually updated their equipment and fleet to take advantage of new technologies that lower emissions. With the development of battery operated landscape equipment, they have partnered with OREGON equipment to provide feedback on the development of their battery line. And they worked hard to modify their facilities and internal operations to be more sustainable. "We have solar panels our facilities, converted all of our lighting inside and out to LED, become a master recycler with Metro, and received EcoBiz Certification."

They've also worked hard to learn and develop procedures to maintain and manage

the new sustainable landscape elements. Bioswales, rain gardens, and green roofs have all become more commonplace but all have unique requirements to maintain their health and viability. Pacific has been a leader in developing these new management approaches, working with architects and local jurisdictions to help improve the design and management guidelines.

Their most recent focus has been on water conservation. Water costs in the Portland metropolitan area have skyrocketed over the last decade and continue to rise faster than any other utility. Historically, water was cheap and the need to conserve not as critical. With water costs triple in some jurisdictions compared with a decade ago, water conservation is essential to maintain cost control as well as protect that critical resource. They've adopted and promote weather-based irrigation, a variety of water conservation upgrades to irrigation systems, and reevaluating landscape elements, including lawn conversion where difficult to irrigate and maintain. "Water conservation is not just updating an irrigation system: True water conservation comes from re-evaluating and modifying the landscape to make it more drought tolerant with the appropriate plant palettes," said Grover.

Education and certification have been key elements of their culture since its founding. Their staff includes 21 with degrees of horticulture and landscape architecture. They have sought out every available certification and work to train their employees to become certified. They have a rigorous in-house training program for all production-related employees to ensure they understand and provide the appropriate service to maintain sustainable operations. "Whether or not you join our team with industry-specific education, you will advance your knowledge and technical skill while here," Grover says.

Pacific has also worked locally and nationally to promote sustainable landscape design and landscape management. Grover is on the Board of Directors of the Oregon Landscape Contractors Association and the National Association of Landscape Professionals and often speaks at both organizations conferences. "New landscape designs and maintenance procedures today are completely different then when I entered the industry 40 years ago," he added. "It has been an exciting ride and I look forward to the future as research and technology continues to provide society with opportunities to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations." ■



Bob Grover, President and Founder

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Accolades and Certifications:

- 10 times listed as one of *Oregon Business's* 100 Best Green Workplaces
- National Association of Landscape Professionals Sustainable Company Award
- Lawn and Landscape Environmental Business Award
- Ecological Business Certified
- Stormwater Facility Management Certified
- LEED Green Certified
- Irrigation Association Certified

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