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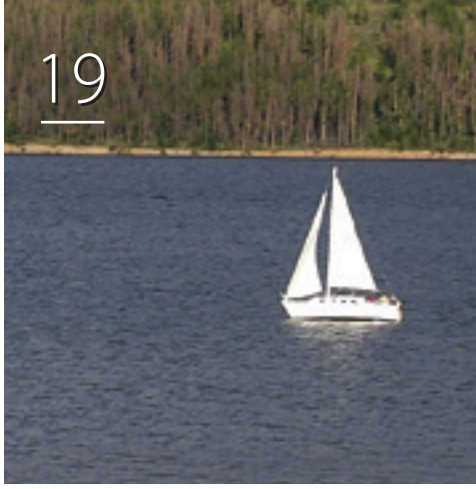
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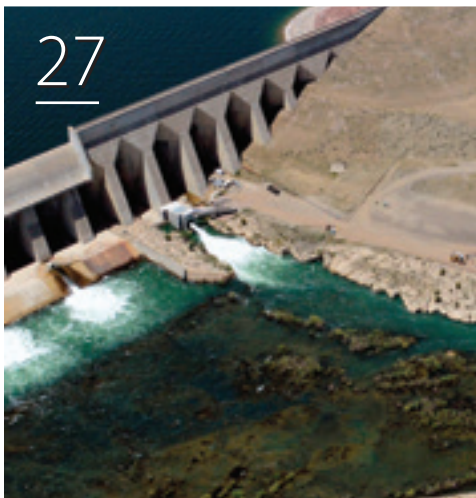
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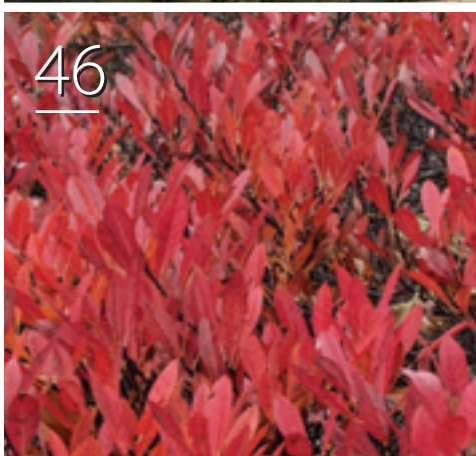
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# Colorado Green



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in the Rocky Mountain region

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*Colorado Green* (ISSN0195-0045) is published bi-monthly by the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado, Inc., 1660 So. Albion St., Suite 831, Denver, Colorado 80222, (303) 757-5611, fax: (303) 757-5636. 3,000 copies of *Colorado Green* are distributed to contributing members and professionals throughout Colorado and educational and governmental institutions across the state. Subscription rates: \$27 per year; \$6.75 per copy. Colorado residents only, please add 3.5% sales tax. Postage paid at Denver, Colorado. Publisher assumes no responsibility for safekeeping or return of unsolicited photos or manuscripts, and reserves all rights to edit material submitted for publication. Approval for publication of copyrighted material submitted to *Colorado Green* is the sole responsibility of the advertiser/contributing authors. ©2015 by Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. All rights reserved. Reproduction of materials contained herein allowed only with permission of the editor. Post master: Please send Form 3579 to ALCC, 1660 So. Albion St., Suite 831, Denver, Colorado 80222. For advertising inquiries, please call Martha Dickenson at 303-502-2518, or email [mdickenson@associationmediapartners.com](mailto:mdickenson@associationmediapartners.com).



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## L&L Top 100 includes 3 Colorado companies

Lawn & Landscape magazine's annual Top 100 list of landscape firms for 2015 included three Colorado-based firms: **Metco Landscape**, no. 31, **Terracare Associates**, no. 38 and **Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care**, no. 71. Each company made the list last year when Metco was a newcomer.

**Brickman Group/ValleyCrest Landscape Companies**, soon to be branded as **Bright-View**, took the top spot. Brickman/Valley-Crest and several other top 10 companies on the list have operations in Colorado.

According to L&L, 2014 combined revenue of the Top 100 companies increased 11 percent over 2013 reaching more than \$8 billion.

## Native Edge among fastest growing in Boulder

**Native Edge Landscapes**, Boulder, was recently named on BizWest's Mercury 100 Award list for the second consecutive year. The award recognizes the fastest growing private companies headquartered in the Boulder Valley and Native Edge ranked fourth. President and founder **Tom Sunderland** said, "Considering we almost closed our doors in 2009, it is a great honor to be listed once again among the top ranking companies in Boulder Valley."

Company rankings were based on the two-year revenue growth from 2012 to 2014 and Native Edge was fourth in the \$2.6 – \$6.0 million category. "It is wonderful to see Native Edge be recognized for its financial success," said Sunderland. "I can only attribute our continued rapid growth to our amazing staff and their dedication to continuous improvement and investment in the future."



Photos courtesy Gina Martinez

Tom Sunderland displays the award



### Industry Calendar

**Sept. 16:** ALCC facility tour and happy hour, Swingle, Denver, [tdifalco@alcc.com](mailto:tdifalco@alcc.com)

**Sept. 17:** ASLACO End of Summer Social, Denver Botanic Gardens, [info@aslacolorado.org](mailto:info@aslacolorado.org)

**Sept. 21:** CHREF golf tournament, noon, Arrowhead Golf Club, Littleton, [mmunoz@coloradonga.org](mailto:mmunoz@coloradonga.org)

**Sept. 22:** ALCC Sustainable Partners Green roof & edibles garden tour, Denver, [bgarber@alcc.com](mailto:bgarber@alcc.com)

**Sept. 23:** ALCC Southern Chapter & Sustainable Partners Tour of Southern Delivery System, [tdifalco@alcc.com](mailto:tdifalco@alcc.com)

**Sept. 24:** CALCP Annual meeting, CALCP@treeandlawncareCO.org

**Sept. 24:** ALCC workshop, Managing your social media presence, Denver, [ccourtade@alcc.com](mailto:ccourtade@alcc.com)

**Sept. 24-25:** ISA Rocky Mountain Chapter Annual Conference, Keystone, [KSylvester@brightonco.gov](mailto:KSylvester@brightonco.gov)

**Oct. 9:** ASLA Colorado 2015 Design Awards Event, Blanc Denver, [info@aslacolorado.org](mailto:info@aslacolorado.org)

**Oct. 14:** ALCC facility tour and happy hour, Brickman/ValleyCrest, Parker, [tdifalco@alcc.com](mailto:tdifalco@alcc.com)

**Oct. 15:** ALCC Western and Mountain Chapters' Lunch n Learn, [tdifalco@alcc.com](mailto:tdifalco@alcc.com)

**Oct. 21-23:** LANDSCAPES, Louisville, KY, sponsored by NALP

**Oct. 28:** ALCC Southern Chapter happy hour, Colorado Springs, [tdifalco@alcc.com](mailto:tdifalco@alcc.com)

**Feb. 9-12:** ProGreen EXPO, Colorado Convention Center, [progreenexpo.com](http://progreenexpo.com)

## Colorado WaterWise has new website

Colorado WaterWise launched a new website, [LoveColoradoWater.org](http://LoveColoradoWater.org), to help educate people in Colorado about the value of water. The site supports last year's Colorado Water - Live Like You Love It campaign aimed to deliver a unified message about the value of water and the need to conserve.

For more information visit [LoveColoradoWater.org](http://LoveColoradoWater.org).

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## New biological control to manage EAB

For six weeks, beginning in June, more than 1,000 stingless, parasitic wasps that target **Emerald Ash Borer** (EAB) were released by the interagency Colorado EAB Response Team in Boulder to help control the spread of the borer. This small, gnat-sized wasp species, *Oobius agrili*, specifically targets EAB eggs and was released at known infested sites on the University of Colorado's Boulder campus.

This is the second time a parasitoid stingless wasp has been used in Colorado as a biological control. The species released in 2014, *Tetrastichus planipennis*, targets the larvae developing under the bark. The release of *Oobius* occurred on the campus where the larvae-attacking parasitoid wasps were released last year.

The *Oobius* parasitic wasp works by locating an EAB egg in tree bark crevices, inserting its own egg inside, where it will hatch, grow and kill the EAB larva before it can emerge. The stingless wasps are not a threat to people and pets.

John Kaltenbach, biological control specialist for the Colorado Department of Agriculture is hoping "biocontrols like these can slow the spread and better manage the impact of emerald ash borer in Colorado."



Photo courtesy Kathleen Alexander

Wasp release device



Photo courtesy Debbie Miller, USFS

Parasitic wasp

## LM150 rankings include eight Colorado companies

Landscape Management's *LM150* list named eight Colorado companies to the list: **Terracare Associates**, no. 37, **Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care**, no. 66, **Designs By Sundown**, no. 96, **American Civil Constructors**, no. 115, **Schultz Industries**, no. 118, **CoCal Landscape Co.**, no. 130, **Emerald Isle Landscaping**, no. 138, and **Mountain High Tree, Lawn & Landscape**, no. 140.

**The Brickman Group/ValleyCrest Companies**, soon to be **BrightView**, ranked first.

*LM150's* Top 25 further categorizes top companies by region, client mix and profit centers and these lists also included Colorado companies: Terracare, no. 6, west region, no. 5, government, no. 16, mowing and landscape maintenance, and no. 25, irrigation and water management; Swingle no. 11, west region, no. 21, residential, no. 9, turf and ornamental care; Designs By Sundown, no. 19, west region and no. 19, residential; CoCal no. 18, government.

Nearly half the companies on the *LM150* list grew by 10 percent or more in 2014. Combined revenue of all *LM150* companies was \$8.5 billion.

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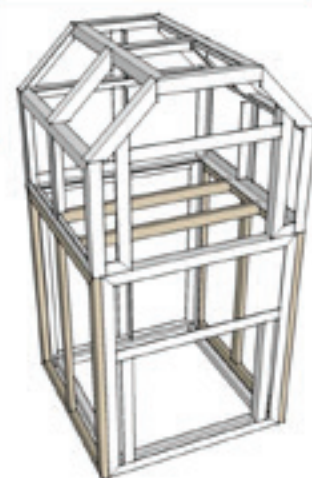
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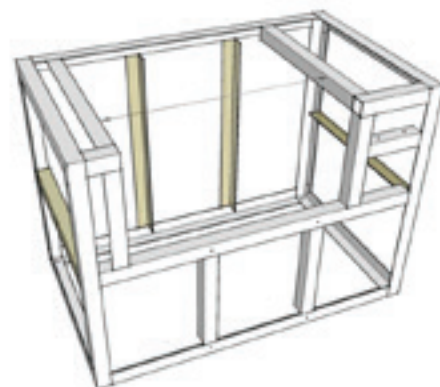
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Photo courtesy -ALCC

## Industry pros earn certification, grow professionalism

Hands-on testing for certification in several landscape skills areas, held at **Pickens Technical College**, Aurora, attracted 63 candidates and about as many judges testing candidates one-on-one.

During this July testing event, 15 people earned 17 industry certifications: irrigation, 6; turf maintenance, 5; ornamental maintenance, 2; softscape installation, 2; and hardscape installation, 2, as individuals and companies grow their skills and professionalism.

## New CSU Horticulture Center opens soon

A new **Colorado State University Horticulture Center** is under construction and scheduled for completion this summer. The \$7.5 million center with greenhouses will strengthen the university's plant research program.

"The state-of-the-art greenhouses will provide research for all types of horticultural crops and will include an area for teaching more hands-on labs for undergraduate programs," said Dr. James Klett, CSU, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. "The site will have some outdoor research plots that should be ready for the 2016 season."

Though the annuals trial and two-winter/three-season perennial gardens will remain where they are, Klett says that the new greenhouses will be used to grow plants for these areas.

"I am very excited about the latest technology and future possibilities for the horticulture department. I'm also grateful we are allowed space to continue to house Plant Select®," said, Pat Hayward, executive director Plant Select®, after a tour of the site in June.



Greenhouse under construction



Horticultural Center nearing completion

Photo courtesy David Stout



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## Colorado Volunteers participate in Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington

ALCC and CALCP members participated in Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery on Monday, July 20, 2015. Every July, hundreds of landscape and lawn care professionals come from across the nation to Arlington National Cemetery to participate in this event which is organized by the National Association of Landscape Professionals. They volunteer their time mulching, upgrading sprinklers, cabling and installing lightning protection for the trees, pruning, planting, liming and aerating the soil. Participants from Colorado were: Kelly Gouge and Tom Lynch, Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care, Eric Moroski, Weisburg Landscape Maintenance along with son Dylan, dad Joe, uncle Mike; Justin Ketner, Highlands Ranch Metro District, Zach Johnson, Colorado State University, and Mari Medrano, Cocal Landscape Services, Inc.



## ALCC and CALCP lobby D.C. lawmakers



Photo courtesy Kristen Fefes

Left to right: Kurt DeLucero, Amy DeLucero, Zach Johnson, Kelly Gouge, Michael Hupf, Steve Steele, Mari Medrano, Justin Ketner and Tom Lynch

The day after Renewal & Remembrance, eleven ALCC/CALCP members also participated in the landscape industry's annual meetings with law-makers in Washington D.C. On July 21, 2015, a delegation of Colorado companies and Kristen Fefes, ALCC, along with landscape and lawn care professionals from around the nation converged on Capitol Hill to meet with their senators and representatives and discuss a wide array of issues that impact their businesses including H-2B, Immigration Reform, Waters of the United States, Pollinator Stewardship, Lyme Disease research and other issues.

The Colorado delegation included: Zach Johnson, CSU; Kelly Gouge and Tom Lynch, Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care; Kurt and Amy DeLucero, Arrowhead Landscape Services, Inc.; Kristen Fefes, ALCC; Michael Hupf, Lifescape Colorado; Steve Steele, Keesen Landscape Management, Inc.; Eric Moroski, Weisburg Landscape Maintenance; Mari Medrano, Cocal Landscape Services, Inc. and Justin Ketner, Highlands Ranch Metro District.



## H-2B correction and update

The July/August issue of *Colorado Green* incorrectly reported that the **Interim Final Rule** (IFR) issued in April reinstated and strengthened the H-2B guest worker program. While the U.S. Department of Labor believes the rule strengthens the program, ALCC, along with other green and seasonal industries across the U.S., feel the rule will cause significant harm.

The IFR is an attempt to establish new regulatory requirements that make the program more costly and complicated for seasonal employers and will hurt small businesses and negatively impact American employees, H-2B employees and the local communities in which they operate. The increased burden could make it impossible for some employers to use the program because of what they are required to provide for H-2B employees – and even to U.S. workers down the line.

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## Irrigation distributor and suppliers support student competition

Photo courtesy Michael W. Umehil



Student participating in the irrigation technology competition

The 2015 FFA Career Development Event (CDE) held at CSU in May hosted more than 1,300 high school students from around the state. In the Ag Technologies competitions, 104 students participated in the hands-on irrigation technology problem.

Hunter Industries and Rain Bird donated the irrigation valves and controllers and CPS Distributors, Inc. donated additional fittings to create 14 testing stations where students in the competition wired valves to a controller and scheduled it according to the scenario provided. These materials provided by industry suppliers facilitated the opportunity to work with high quality industry components.

The irrigation materials will be used on an ongoing basis as part of ALCC's Career Pathways Program to help train high school teachers who, in turn, will train students in irrigation skills. The Career Pathways Program will be underway fall semester 2015 in selected high schools along the Front Range and offer training to high school students so they can be job-ready for the green industry upon graduation.



Photo courtesy Hardy Boy Plants



Voters rating plants

## Flower trials

The Hardy Boy Flower Trials event showcased more than 800 flower varieties at Country Fair Garden Center, Arvada. Industry pros voted for their favorites rating growth consistency, bloom color, shape and size, and uniqueness. Winners will be announced at the end of the season.



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Photo courtesy Laura Pittman



James Klett, Ph.D.

## Klett marks 35 years at CSU

**James Klett**, professor, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, is recognized this year for the exceptional contribution he has made during his 35 years at **Colorado State University**.

Throughout his time at CSU, Klett has dedicated his efforts to plant research. He created an arboretum, expanded the annual trial gardens and established perennial trails as well as coordinated several state and regional programs including Plant Select® and Plant-talk Colorado. He has also developed new courses and helped countless students create careers in the green industry.

Klett has been active with Colorado green industry associations and has served several terms on their various boards. He is also a regular contributor to *Colorado Green* magazine sharing his research updates on plants and how they fare in Colorado.

Looking forward, Klett's continued research as well as students' education will benefit from the new Colorado State University Horticulture Center scheduled to open soon.

## Alpenglow celebrates 30 years



Photo courtesy ALCC

This year **Alpenglow Sprinkler**, Fort Collins, celebrates 30 years in business. Before starting the company, owner **Brad Petschek** came to Colorado to be what he calls "a working ski bum" and found employment with a Carbondale landscape company. He soon became a sprinkler foreman and spent five years working for his first industry mentor who told him, "It's not a glamorous job, but there will always be a need. You'll never be out of work."

In 1985 Petschek founded his own business and has never been totally out of work. Petschek admits to being passionate about irrigation and water conservation. "I'm proud that we are at the forefront of helping customers achieve water savings and one of the leading companies in Fort Collins in helping customers get rebates for irrigation components," he says.

Petschek also attended Colorado State University where he earned a degree in forest management.



## New release from HRI tells industry's story



The **Horticultural Research Institute (HRI)** released a new book in July, *Back Then to Right Now: The Horticultural Industry Comes of Age*. Authored by **Bob Dolibois**, retired EVP American Nursery & Landscape Association and edited by **Sally D. Benson**, editor *American Nurseryman* magazine, the book follows changes in the nursery and landscape industry and its associations over the past 40 years, especially the use of computers and electronic devices and increased industry regulation.

All proceeds from the book will benefit HRI, the exclusive publisher.

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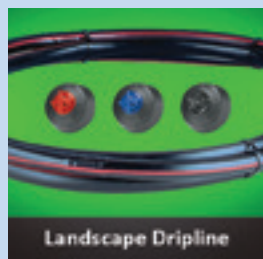
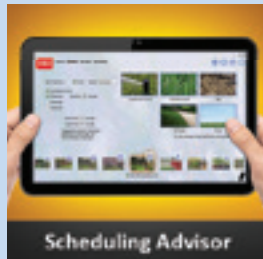


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## green News

### Grants support new greenhouse at FRCC

A new greenhouse at **Front Range Community College (FRCC)** Westminster campus opened in August. Grants supporting construction came from **Colorado Garden Foundation, Boettcher Foundation** and **FRCC** reserves.

The **Colorado Horticulture Research and Education Foundation (CHREF)** donated funds to purchase equipment for the new greenhouse. **Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association** and **Happy Transplants Garden Club** supplied materials inside the greenhouse.

The greenhouse provides a laboratory where students can get hands-on experience for different career paths. Generous donations from **Rain Bird** and **Hunter Industries** of more than \$10,000 in irrigation components will support the Irrigation Learning Lab scheduled to be operational in the fall 2015 semester.



FRCC greenhouse

Photo courtesy: Joy Demore



### Colorado Total Maintenance celebrates 20 years

**Chris Willis**, president **Colorado Total Maintenance** co-founded CTM in 1995. Back then CTM stood for the first initials of the three founders. When the other two left the business in 1997, Willis created the new name, Colorado Total Maintenance. The company provides landscape construction and maintenance, irrigation installation and maintenance, snow removal, concrete work and more.

Willis, a self-taught entrepreneur who learned by doing says, "I was educated through the school of hard knocks."

When his partners left the company, CTM was in some financial distress. Willis says, "As for me, I just kept going, because I didn't know what else to do. I was the Nike slogan, 'Just Do It.'" He kept building the business and went on to earn several industry designations including Landscape Industry Certified Technician, irrigation auditor, pesticide applicator and arborist.

Around 1997, CTM started working with homebuilders and that is where Willis met his wife, Shannon. **Shannon Willis**, now CEO, who took over administration, helped CTM set up new internal management systems.

These days, most of CTM's contracts are municipal and over the past 10 years, Willis has become adept at navigating the proposal process with cities, park districts, utilities and other municipal groups and stakeholders.

Now with about 75 people, Willis believes the success of the company has to do with the culture – one which promotes respect, mentoring and high quality. "It's been a thrilling ride," he says.

He is thankful that the company is now in a position where he has more time to spend with his wife and two boys.



Shannon and Chris Willis

Photo courtesy: Joy Montgomery



Photo courtesy: David Staats

### Industry votes best annuals at CSU

The best of this year's annual flower trials at Colorado State University were decided, in August, by the votes of green industry pros, faculty members, horticulturalists, master gardeners and others. Trials evaluate the performance of plants in Colorado's unique growing conditions. Winning annuals will be announced at the end of the season.



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# Deciduous trees that thrive in Colorado

The eight deciduous trees featured below have proven to be hardy and reliable, and survived the rapid temperature change in November 2014. The performance of these plants has been observed over many years at Colorado State University's Plant Environmental Research Center and they have shown consistent adaptability to our area. These plants are generally suitable for elevations 4,000 to 6,000 feet and most have multiple seasons of interest and/or ornamental features. 



'Homestead' buckeye



## *Acer campestre* 'Evelyn'

Queen Elizabeth™ Hedge Maple is a small-medium tree for dry sites with more alkaline soils. 'Evelyn' is a cultivar with darker green leaves and a more uniform upright growth habit. It seems to have a faster growth habit and can set a lot of fruit.

Zone 5-6

**Tips & Tricks:** This plant is a nice alternative choice for a smaller tree in Colorado with foliage that remains green later in the year, turning yellow in the fall.



## *Acer saccharum* 'Arrowhead'

Arrowhead sugar maple has an upright-pyramidal habit, a strong central leader, and dense branching. It consistently produces excellent bright red to orange foliage in the fall.

Zone 5-7

**Tips & Tricks:** The trees have an attractive uniform growth habit and seem to be pest and disease free.



## *Aesculus glabra x flava* 'Homestead'

Homestead buckeye is a hybrid of *A. glabra* (Ohio buckeye) and *A. flava* (yellow buckeye). It has a more dense, rounded crown with cream colored flowers and dark red to orange red fall foliage.

Zone 4-7

**Tips & Tricks:** While generally fruitless this tree can set a little fruit. It seems to have no problems with pests or diseases.



## *Betula x* 'Crimson Frost'

Crimson Frost birch is a hybrid of *B. platyphylla* var. *szechuanica* and *B. pendula* 'Purpurea'. The glossy, deep purple leaves contrast well with the white bark. The tree has an upright pyramidal growth habit with pendulous branches.

Zone 5-7

**Tips & Tricks:** Branches begin to weep quickly after planting and dark purple leaves add a unique leaf color in the landscape.



## *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*

*Katsura* Tree is an attractive tree with interesting foliage and growth habit. Leaves emerge in spring with a reddish purple hue, fade to a blue-green and then turn a golden yellow color in the fall.

Zone 5-7

**Tips & Tricks:** Before leaves drop in the fall, they smell like toasted marshmallows, a unique and pleasing feature.



Photos courtesy David Staats



### *Cladrastris kentukea*

American yellowwood is named after the yellow color of its heartwood. The flowers emerging in May and June are attractive and fragrant white panicles. The bark has a smooth texture and is light gray in color.

**Tips & Tricks:** The long pendulous flowers are very showy and are followed by chains of green pods that turn brown in the fall. This is a nice looking underutilized tree for the area.

Zone 5-7



### *Corylus colurna*

Turkish filbert is largely under used in the landscape. It is an attractive tree with few known pest problems. The growth habit is a formal, pyramidal shape with low branching that can be pruned to create a tree form. Foliage is dark green in the summer.

**Tips & Tricks:** This species is a good choice for urban areas and is tolerant of a variety of conditions.

Zone 5-7



### *Pyrus ussuriensis 'MorDak'*

Prairie Gem® pear is a cultivar of *Ussurian* pear with a smaller mature size. At maturity it becomes more rounded and dense in growth habit. Flowers emerge early at the same time as leaves.

**Tips & Tricks:** The tree needs to be cross-pollinated to produce fruit which is not very ornamental.

Zone 4-7



—Contributed by James E. Klett, Colorado State University, Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

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# The truth about water

## It depends on your perspective

By Colorado Green editorial staff

Photo courtesy Denver Water

We need water to live. Beyond that, the truth about water is complicated and it depends on our own perspectives and the common ground from which consensus grows. How do we earn our livelihoods? Where do we live? How much does water cost and are there incentives to conserve? When was the last time it rained or snowed? The real truth comes out when we answer these questions.

Western Slope people answer differently than Front Range folks. The farmer's take will be different than the suburbanite's. It is at the local level where we take notice – when it impacts us directly.

Yet how many of us really understand the complexity of the infrastructures needed to push water through the faucet every time we turn it on? The most common and costly problem nationwide facing the delivery of safe and adequate water is the aging infrastructure of the 2 million miles of pipe that make up the nation's water and wastewater systems. Most of the infrastructure is hidden from our sight, buried underground.

Yet, here in Colorado the infrastructure also includes highly visible reservoirs and lakes. How often do we think about drinking water when we drive past Lake Dillon? It's the mountain ambiance, good fishing and sailing that really speak to us.

### **The very presence of these lakes points to the big picture on water in Colorado: delivery.**

How do we move water from its source to where it is needed and how do we store it for later use? And what does this mean for people in different areas of the state? How are the decisions made about where and how the water gets delivered? Also, how do we balance and prioritize the water needs of urban communities and agriculture? Finally, where does landscape fit in?

### **Again, water depends on perspective.**

The Western Slope is where most of the snow pack accumulates and feeds the Colorado River basin. Yet it's the other side of the Continental Divide where most of the state's population lives. The Front Range with its growing population and water needs continuously hunts for more sources of water. Consider Colorado Springs the only major city in our state not located near a major river. For more than 100 years, it has been piping most of its water from the Western Slope.

In this issue of *Colorado Green* we share some of the divergent perspectives from people in the landscape industry throughout Colorado. We also present the stories of two new major water delivery systems in Colorado – water projects of a scale and complexity that are unlikely to be seen again in the state – or possibly the West.

The project in southern Colorado is nearly four years into construction after 20 years of planning. The first phase will be online next year with the second phase – new reservoirs – beginning construction within a decade. We hope you take in the gargantuan scope not only of the engineering feats of the project but the tremendous time and effort required among multiple stakeholders with varied interests during the 20 years of planning.

In northern Colorado, the new delivery system is more than 12 years into planning and is awaiting further permitting from various agencies and municipalities as well as the Final Environment Impact Statement (EIS). The final EIS is expected to be completed in 2016 with a final permit decision due in 2017.

Once online, these new systems - with water storage capacities in new reservoirs - are expected to support population and industrial growth for several decades. In addition, they will provide backup water supplies during periods of drought.

If we're honest, thoughts about water for most of us along the Front Range early this summer were about too much of it! Nonetheless, water remains a critical concern in Colorado and we have explored some of the nuances in this issue.

Dive in!

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# Ivan Geer: View from the Western Slope

**C**olorado Green recently interviewed Ivan Geer about how Colorado River water is used and viewed by those who live in and around the river basin. A civil engineer by background and resident of Grand Junction, Geer has worked with the irrigation industry for more than 15 years. He spent many years at Grand Junction Pipe & Supply and has served in a leadership role in ALCC’s Western Chapter, including president. Geer gained the majority of his knowledge of water issues by working with Mark Hermundstad of Williams Turner and Holmes, PC on various projects. Geer became well-informed about the nuances of water, agriculture and conservation in western Colorado – and how people west of the Continental Divide feel about their water heading east.

**CG: What are the big picture issues with water on the Western Slope?**

**Geer:** The Colorado River is over allocated due to many factors. When original law and basin compacts were developed, precipitation in the area may have been higher than normal, and during these wet years population and agricultural activities have increased. Overriding all of the discussion is the Colorado River Compact of 1922 which requires the upper basin to pass a certain amount of water to lower basin users every year.

On the Western Slope, the way that water rights are set up, water is often tied to the land. Still, laws about water rights are complex – and it’s not surprising that there are ongoing lawsuits over who can use water and when. One of the biggest factors faced by users on the Western Slope is the “use it or lose it” conundrum.

**CG: Who uses or loses?**

**Geer:** This applies primarily to agriculture, the biggest user of water, and the dis-incentive for ag to conserve. When the ag industry diverts water for crops, it establishes both their need and right to divert and use water. Many ag water users feel it’s essential to divert water to flood irrigate in order to hold on to their water rights. If scrutinized, they can show an established need for water – and lots of it - based on their years of use. On the other hand, if you don’t divert water for 10 years, you can possibly lose your water rights.

There is pressure and modern day examples for this fear and concern. Case and point, many properties in the San Luis Valley and in the headwaters of the Colorado River sold to entities seeking to transfer the water downstream or to trans-mountain diversions, which essentially dried up the land.

This is where conservation becomes complex. Doing the “right” thing by conserving might not be the best thing for your crops and livelihood – or keeping water in western Colorado. As we become really efficient in our use of water, we have the potential to lose more of it. When less water is diverted to agriculture, more water leaves western Colorado and ends up on the East Slope. Also, with decreased diversion and flood style irrigation, there is also less water going back into the ground and reduced return flows into the river, in late season. Without return flow, there is less water in the Colorado River in the fall of every year for recreation and late season irrigation. Bottom line, nothing is simple when it comes to water.

The landscape industry faces somewhat different issues, primarily because it is not the largest consumer of water. There are many wins for the industry with water conservation because of increased business opportunities through technology and application of expertise, and low risk of adversely affecting water rights.

**CG: How do people on the Western Slope feel about water being diverted to the Eastern Slope?**

**Geer:** The Western Slope view is that there should be incentives for Eastern Slope users to reduce their lawns and their water use. It’s preferable to reduce water by cutting out high demand plants and having graduated water rates so you pay more when you use more. This would also encourage more efficient irrigation of the landscape. Over here, we feel this is a better approach than building gigantic pipelines for additional trans-mountain diversions. Out numbered by the more populated East, the West always feels somewhat pressured and threatened when it comes to water.

In addition, one of the senior water rights that keeps substantial amounts of water from being diverted to the Eastern Slope is the Shoshone power plant diversion in Glenwood Canyon. There was steep and legitimate concern when the penstock (intake structure) failed a few years ago, for if Xcel didn’t repair the penstock, the senior water rights for the power plant couldn’t be called and



Ivan Geer

Photo courtesy Ivan Geer

**80%** Up to 80% of the water from the Colorado River on the state’s Western Slope irrigates more than 270,000 acres of agriculture west of the Continental Divide. The river also provides water to nearly 2 million Eastern Slope residents carried to them via a series of transbasin water diversions. Water from the river generates power, creates artificial snow at ski areas and is a resource for outdoor recreation.

Two interstate compacts and an international treaty shape the river’s use and flow from its headwaters in Colorado all the way to Mexico. The river feeds into Lake Powell and Lake Mead providing water to countless users in other western states and Mexico.

that would decrease water flowing on the Western Slope.

**CG: Is watering landscapes different on the Western Slope?**

**Geer:** The Grand Junction area offers an interesting model of landscape irrigation. There are three main potable water providers. Residents using the City of Grand Junction's supply, water lawns with domestic, potable water. Residents in surrounding areas in the Ute Water district are discouraged from watering their landscapes with domestic water through policy and aggressive tiered billing rates. A few years ago, Ute Water's high volume consumer rates were higher than rates in Las Vegas, and many people reduced the sizes of lawns and the amount of plantings.

**As we become really efficient in our use of water, we lose more of it. When less water is diverted to agriculture, more water leaves Colorado and ends up in Lake Mead or Lake Powell.**

In addition, many property owners can take advantage of irrigation water – non-potable water - through irrigation companies including the Grand Valley Irrigation Co., Orchard Mesa Irrigation District, Grand Valley Water Users, and Redlands Water and Power. There are also many small and sub-provider companies that are too numerous to mention, as well as direct diversion rights of individuals, farms, and industry. Consumers from irrigation companies usually have enough water for the landscape without using potable water. Depending on where you live and the infrastructure, you can end up having both potable and non-potable water available to your property. Some users chose potable as it is more reliable and less maintenance, but will pay for it accordingly.

**CG: What's ahead for water management?**

**Geer:** Sadly, you don't see policy change until there is a crisis. And when the crisis abates, people become complacent again. The big thing is to create educational awareness, but it takes years to do this. We need to find out how best to incentivize people to look at their landscapes

and really consider what and how they grow. We see examples in California and Las Vegas of what can be done and how a water crisis can create change. Also, new infrastructure throughout the country is getting smarter and that, too, will lead to ongoing improvement as we implement it.

In my personal opinion, although there isn't currently a system or legal framework that would facilitate this idea, we could create a market that allowed people who currently own the water to lease to downstream or even Eastern Slope users, especially large urban centers or big agriculture with significant financial resources. In this case some Western Slope residents could financially benefit while still maintaining the option to retain their water rights. However, this is just another pipe dream, like the "Big Straw" project proposed more than 10 years ago for diverting water from the Colorado River below Grand Junction to the Eastern Slope.

*Ivan Geer worked in the supply industry at Grand Junction Pipe & Supply consulting with the water engineering division for about 12 years and is now aggregate manager at Elam Construction, Inc. working gravel pit related water issues.*

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# Colorado Springs' water challenge

By Lyn Dean

## Three from southern Colorado weigh in

Colorado Springs, a city not located near a major water source, precariously balances the water needs of its businesses and residents with its growing population. By necessity, Colorado Springs has always been planning for innovative ways to secure water for the future.

Three individuals from the green industry have had long-term involvement with Colorado Springs Utilities and the Water Planning Advisory Group (WPAG) to bring industry perspective to water decisions and issues within their city. Two – Tim Emick and Eric Moroski – are from landscape companies. The third, Levi Heidrick, is a nursery owner. Their perspectives are woven within the following discussion of Colorado Springs' water challenges.

### The water story

Whether we use water in a business or simply as a residential consumer, we all hear talk about snow pack. The stark reality about snow is the same for all who live in Colorado. "Eighty percent of the water – the snow – falls west of the Continental Divide... and 80 percent of the people live on the east side," said Wayne Vanderschuere, Water Supply Manager, Colorado Springs Utilities in an online video. "So it sets up an interesting dichotomy in terms of where the water is. Water is in the west and population and demand is in the east."

At the city level, Tim Emick, president Timberline Landscaping, Inc., Colorado Springs and member of the WPAG, underscores the challenge. "The problem for Colorado Springs is that about 74 percent of its water comes from the Western Slope," Water coming across the Continental Divide means the source is ultimately the Colorado River system, a river system that is already fully allocated and serves more than 30 million people in seven U.S. states and Mexico. At last year's annual meeting of the Colorado River Water Users Association in December, two representatives of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation estimated that the Colorado River system now has an average "structural deficit" of 1.2 million acre-feet per year.

"Water is not just a local challenge. It's a shared problem of the southwest states," says Eric Moroski, vice president Weisburg Landscape Maintenance, and WPAG member. Moroski is a veteran of the last Colorado drought that began in 2002 and continued in Colorado Springs until 2005. Two-day watering became a way of life and while it's not the best for plants, he remembers how his company and others learned to embrace restrictions in the cause of conservation. They made it work.

Workers with Garney Construction install a 50 ft., 66-in. diameter pipe segment in SDS



Photo courtesy Colorado Springs Utilities

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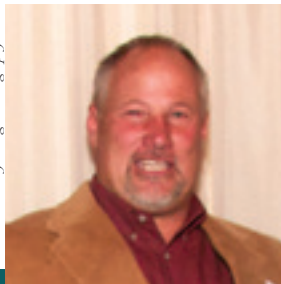
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Tim Emick



Eric Moroski



Levi Heidrich

**Even with SDS, Emick says that the city  
will be built out in 50 years.**

### **Paying up while waiting for the new major delivery system**

Recent drought years in Colorado Springs are reminders to many residents that conservation and water management are critical. Yet, that's not enough.

In 1996, Colorado Springs adopted the Water Resource Plan stating that just over half – 55 percent – of the city's future water supply through 2040 must come from a new major delivery system.

"The SDS project has been in the making for more than 20 years," said Emick. "It required a lot of planning and permitting." After considering dozens of proposals with different configurations, Colorado Springs Utilities believed Southern Delivery System (SDS) to be the best and most cost effective of the options.

Colorado Springs Utilities customers have already been funding SDS for a few years through increased rates from 2011-2014. This year there is no rate increase.

"The period of rate increases through 2016, when SDS comes online, gives the city a new increased baseline for water utilities, one that is more realistic," said Moroski. According to SDS Water – part of Colorado Springs Utilities – only two-thirds of the rate increase actually funds SDS. The remaining one-third funds maintenance and operation of the existing system.

Construction started in 2010 and in March 2015 the SDS project reached a major milestone. The new 50 mile, 66 inch diameter pipeline through two counties that will bring water to Colorado Springs from Pueblo Reservoir was completed. The pipeline makes use of water rights already owned on the Arkansas River as well as water exchange rights.

"What this project means for the communities in it is having secure water of several decades," John Fredell, SDS program director told Engineering News-Record Mountain States. "We want to make sure we can attract businesses here and keep the ones we have."

Even with SDS, Emick says that the city will be built out in 50 years. This is precisely why Colorado Springs Utilities is already preparing an Integrated Water Resource Plan (IWRP), a long-term strategic plan for providing a reliable and sustainable water supply beyond 2040. Both Emick and Moroski participate in meetings as part of the Water Planning Advisory Group. Still in the early stages, IWRP is in the process of identifying and prioritizing issues, risks and opportunities.

### **How landscape businesses and customers are reacting to SDS and higher rates**

Will more available water have a negative impact on conservation? Emick doesn't think so.

"People are policing themselves," he says. "They are being smart. Our customers are talking to us about their water budgets and want to work within it. Water rates have gone up, third tier rates are very expensive and no one wants to pay that much."

"When rates go up, it works the same as water restrictions. People cut back and if they buy fewer plants, it affects our business," said Levi Heidrich, co-owner Colorado Tree Farm Nursery. He has also been a regular along with Moroski providing industry perspective at meetings with Colorado Springs Utilities and City Council since December 2012 when many anticipated another drought was ahead.

Emick and Moroski see less turf, a shift to landscapes requiring less water. Emick estimates that the average yard is down from 90 percent to 50 percent bluegrass. He has also noticed that many customers with turf want to retrofit existing irrigation systems and install smart controllers. "It costs less than installing Xeriscape and the breakeven is only a year or two compared to 5-7 years with Xeriscape," he said. "However, many of our new designs are Xeriscape."

More education about water is still needed.

Emick said, "Many people mistakenly think cities and residents are the big users of water, but



agriculture is the biggest user.” Heidrich agrees that education is needed. “I think there is a lot of misinformation about the green industry out there about how much water we use.”

Educating people is critical and Moroski finds it an ongoing challenge. “Different people cycle through property management companies and the boards of HOAs,” he says. “This recycling means there is a constant need for education.” For example, he says, “People have to understand what usable precipitation means and what ET controllers are actually reading.”

“People have to learn how to water properly and how to check plants,” says Heidrich who goes out of his way to seize opportunities to educate his customers about ways to conserve water and still grow plants. “They have to learn what Xeriscape really is. It’s not just rocks. Plants have to be part of the equation. They provide too much good to be on the chopping block when it gets dry.”


The good news is people and businesses are coming around and conservation is working. “Water use per capita is down in the state,” says Emick. Recent statistics from the Colorado River Water Users Association Conference in December 2014 indicate that municipal water use per capita in Colorado has declined by 38 percent from 1990 to 2010 and industrial and municipal reuse of water has increased.

People are learning from past droughts. Many have moved away from large turf lawns and Moroski says most discovered that their landscapes survived on a two-day per week watering schedule.

### SDS II and beyond

“Having SDS online means Colorado Springs can grow, but it still needs conservation and more storage capacity. It takes a long time to get reservoirs approved,” said Emick.

The soon-to-be-completed delivery system is only the first phase of the SDS project that includes two new reservoirs, and an expanded water treatment plant and pump stations. Moving on to Phase II of SDS is expected in the 2020-2025 timeframe and depends on water needs of customers in Colorado Springs Utilities area.

Even before completion of the new delivery system, the search for future water continues in Colorado Springs as the city’s Water Planning Advisory Group assesses potential risks and opportunities. 



Colorado Springs water system

Graphic courtesy SDS Water

**Our customers are talking to us about their water budgets and want to work within it.**



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# Two Colorado **water** projects flow forward

## Conservation alone cannot sustain **population growth**

By Lisa Sigler

**A**s state officials are finalizing Colorado's Water Plan, the state's very first water plan, two regional water projects that geographically book end the Front Range aren't waiting for the ink to dry.

These two major water projects – Southern Delivery System (SDS) in southern Colorado and Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) in northern Colorado – are at two different stages of progress. But both will be critical to supplying water to dozens of growing communities in the state.

### **Growth, water demand and conservation**

El Paso County, which includes Colorado Springs, is the most populous county in Colorado. The state demographer estimates its population will grow 1.9 percent per year through 2030, or 350,000 more people. The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization reports that employment in the northern region of Colorado is expected to grow by 71.4 percent from 2005 to 2030, faster than either Denver or Colorado Springs.

The subject of growth has led to heated debates about the best approach to meeting water demands. Many people, including environmental interest groups, are advocating in the state water plan to conserve more water to support future demand, including mandated conservation targets for municipalities. Since outdoor watering for landscapes can be viewed as an “optional” use of water and less vital than water needed to sustain people, for hygiene or growing food, it tends to be the prime target for additional conservation efforts.

Yet the water savings gained through conservation are not sufficient to meet growing demand. The 2010 Statewide Water Supply Initiative estimated the state will need an additional 600,000 to 1 million acre-feet of water by 2050, and that the gap between supply and demand will be from 190,000 to 630,000 acre-feet depending on how many proposed projects get built.

Water planners in both southern and northern Colorado have already realized that conservation, while important, is not enough. In order to meet the needs of future residents and area employers, both regions recognized the necessity for well-planned projects that both transport and store water.

### **Southern Delivery System**

Construction of Colorado Springs Utilities' Southern Deliver System (SDS) is nearing completion. The water project will supply four communities including Colorado Springs, City of



SDS Pueblo Reservoir North Outlet

Photos courtesy Colorado Springs Utilities

**The water savings gained through conservation are not sufficient to meet growing demand.**



SDS northern outlet

For Colorado Springs, the second largest city in the state, SDS will become part of **the elaborate network of 200 miles of pipe and 25 storage reservoirs** that comprise the city's existing water system.

Fountain, Security and Pueblo West. The pipeline's path from the south gave the new water system its name.

This \$829 million project has been more than 20 years in the making. It was conceived as part of Colorado Springs' water resource plan developed in 1996. A number of construction options were evaluated and vetted through an extensive public involvement process. A pipeline moving water — that Colorado Springs already owned the rights to — from Pueblo Reservoir to El Paso County was deemed to be the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly option.

For Colorado Springs, the second largest city in the state, SDS will become part of the elaborate network of 200 miles of pipe and 25 storage reservoirs that comprise the city's existing water system. As the only major city on the Front Range not located next to a major river, about 70 percent of the community's water comes from the Colorado River basin west of the Continental Divide. SDS offers another way to deliver water to the city and provides critical back up for the city's aging water system.

SDS successfully navigated through the almost insurmountable challenge of environmental studies and permitting that culminated with a final Environmental Impact Statement in 2008. Colorado Springs' City Council members approved rate increases needed to pay for the project. These milestones cleared the way for construction. And in 2010, contractors began laying the first of some 50 miles of mostly 66-inch diameter blue pipe (blue being the color designated for water pipe). The project also includes three pump stations that will push the water up 1,500

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Colorado Springs water system including SDS

*Graphic courtesy Colorado Springs Utilities*

## Balancing urban and agriculture interests

A key part of the success with both SDS and NISP has been the ability of both projects to ensure agricultural and urban interests are being met. Agriculture is the single largest user of water. With continued growth in the state and no new water supplies, reallocation of existing supplies is inevitable and the majority of these transfers have been from agricultural to municipal.

Without the new water systems, municipalities would continue to buy agricultural water rights and change them to municipal use – a practice, commonly called “buy and dry.” Farmland dries up with little chance of ever being returned to agricultural production.

In the north, having NISP will prevent more than 60,000 acres of farmland from drying up. In the south, SDS will allow Colorado Springs, for the first time, to reuse its Western Slope water, which means preserving agricultural water rights in the Arkansas Basin instead of targeting them.

The conflicts that have played out on some other water efforts have been avoided with NISP and SDS, which helped them move forward.



feet in elevation to a new state-of-the-art water treatment plant capable of treating 50 million gallons of water per day initially with expansion capabilities to 100 million gallons per day.

The project, one of the largest currently being built in the western United States, is scheduled to deliver water in first quarter 2016. It is currently tracking about \$156 million under budget. Money borrowed at extremely favorable interest rates, competitive contracting and tight project management have yielded significant costs savings. The savings mean fewer annual rate increases for customers than originally planned.



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Photos courtesy Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District



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Horsetooth Reservoir

The future second phase of SDS includes construction of two large storage reservoirs that will bring water storage closer to Colorado Springs and provide huge benefits to the city in times of drought.

Much like the situation in southern Colorado, conservation alone cannot span the future water supply gap.

### Northern Integrated Supply Project

Headquartered in Berthoud, the Northern Water Conservancy District is leading the planning for the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), a project that would involve building two new storage reservoirs in northern Colorado to supply 15 municipalities and water districts. NISP participants include some of the fastest-growing towns in northern Colorado spanning Larimer, Weld, Morgan and Boulder counties. Because each water district services multiple communities, NISP will provide water for businesses and residents in 30 towns, including the south side of Fort Collins, Loveland, Erie and Fort Lupton.

Much like the situation in southern Colorado, conservation alone cannot span the future water supply gap. Even with strong water conservation programs in place and water usage of

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NISP participants at favorably low levels, water storage is necessary. Millions of acre-feet of water already have escaped the state due to the abundant snow and rainfall. Northern Water could have legally stored this surplus water, but had no means to do so.

That's where NISP comes in. The two new storage reservoirs with the combined storage capacity of 215,000 acre-feet would deliver 40,000 acre-feet to municipal water supplies each year. Two water pump stations and a pipeline would transport the water a short distance to the storage reservoirs.

Glade Reservoir would be located northwest of Fort Collins to the north of Horsetooth Reservoir. It would be 5 miles long, 260 feet deep and have the capacity to store 170,000 acre-feet of water, slightly larger than Horsetooth Reservoir. The water to fill Glade Reservoir would be diverted from the Poudre River using the already existing Poudre Valley Canal. There will be no new structures on the Poudre River and contrary to opponents' claims, it will not "dam" nor "dry up" the Poudre River.

Galeton Reservoir would be built east of Ault and northeast of Greeley. It would hold about 40,000 acre-feet of water at full capacity. Galeton would be filled by water diverted from the South Platte River downstream from Greeley. Galeton water would be delivered to two agricultural irrigation companies who would "exchange" or trade it for water they store in Horsetooth Reservoir. Since many of the NISP participants already get their water from Horsetooth, the infrastructure already is in place to deliver additional water from the reservoir.

NISP is expected to cost more than \$700 million to construct and could take about four to eight years to complete. It has been through 12 years of environmental study.

In 2009, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is responsible for permitting the project, issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, but decided additional study was needed. Since two other reservoir expansion projects for the city of Fort Collins and Greeley also are planned on the Poudre River, additional study time was required to determine the real impact of all three projects.

That additional analysis was revealed in the Corps' 1,500-page Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement issued this June. The study was one of the most extensive and intensive reviews of a water project ever undertaken in Colorado and included evaluations of riparian habitat, water quality effects and impacts on Poudre River stream flows. One of the key components of the study was a mitigation plan illustrating how NISP participants will provide additional water to the Poudre

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Photo courtesy Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District

Olympus Dam at Big Thompson

River during low-flow periods, such as the winter months, and will build structures that enhance fish travel and habitat and implement river restoration measures.

The project has several remaining hurdles to overcome, including a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision, securing permits required under the Clean Water Act, and securing an approved state Fish and Wildlife Mitigation Plan and many other local permits.

### Colorado fortunate for now

The time, money, effort and public outreach necessary for both of these projects underscore how difficult it is to build a new water project in the West today. And water managers believe it will only get more challenging. These two projects may be some of the last of their size and complexity to be built in the state. Permitting and financing projects of this size are getting more challenging. Water “buffalos” reminisce about water projects that never got off the ground – Two Forks and Homestake II and others. These projects were unable to get the critical regulatory approvals necessary to move forward and were met with intense public opposition.

Businesses and customers who rely upon municipal water supplies for their lives and livelihoods will undoubtedly see increased emphasis on conservation versus new projects. Water rates will continue to rise as aging infrastructure requires funding and these new projects are paid for. Now more than ever, businesses that depend on water need to stay informed about water development in the state.

While other states watch California struggle to meet current water demand amidst severe drought, Coloradans are fortunate that these water providers are investing in infrastructure that will transport and store water resources to meet future demand and, along with ongoing conservation, will help weather drought. The availability of water is absolutely critical to the landscape industry and other businesses that dependent on water to thrive.

For more information on these projects visit [SDSWater.org](http://SDSWater.org) and [NorthernWater.org](http://NorthernWater.org). 

—Lisa Sigler owns Sigler Communication, a Denver-based communications firm that works with SDS, NISP and ALCC.



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# Lowell Kaufhold: New water for northern Colorado



Photo courtesy CPS Distributors, Inc.

Lowell Kaufhold,  
CPS Distributors, Inc.

**As** a supplier of irrigation materials and an active advocate for water conservation both statewide and nationally, Lowell Kaufhold’s opinions about water run deep and wide. He is responsible for July being designated by the governor as Smart Irrigation Month and his company aggressively promotes education about smart water use.

Kaufhold has also become an interested observer at many meetings and rallies for the new water delivery system proposed for northern Colorado – the Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP). Here he shares his views about water in general and why he feels this project will benefit northern Colorado.

**CG:** As a green industry person, what’s your perspective on NISP?

**Kaufhold:** I am a Colorado insider and I’m interested in water. I’ve been going to NISP meetings and rallies to understand all that it involves – all that it potentially offers. If we don’t look ahead to the future to make sure we have enough water, how do we have an economy? How does any industry survive? If we don’t address this now, what will happen down the road?

I have met a lot of people who support this project. Fifteen different water districts support it. This project will support agricultural and industrial as well as municipal interests. From what I have learned, everyone stands to benefit.


**CG:** Should Colorado work harder to hold on to its water?

**Kaufhold:** All of Colorado’s water flows out. We are a use it or lose it state. In wet years, as in 2013 when we had the September floods and again this spring, we allowed millions of gallons of captureable water to flow away. If we can’t capture water in the Poudre River, we lose it. Why should we restrict use and lose water? If we don’t create ongoing resources, we are not creating a water legacy for our children and grandchildren. Capturing and storing water protects the immediate and long-term future of our state and its people.

**CG:** With new reservoirs visibly showing increased storage capacity, how do we mitigate human nature and the “we’re OK now mentality” that works against conservation?

**Kaufhold:** We can never stop promoting conservation. Even if new reservoirs are full of water in the next drought, they may not be the golden answer to all our problems. People do become complacent until lack becomes an issue and when they can’t turn the tap on they will care about it. In the meantime, we have to continue educating everyone – inside the industry and outside. Promote the benefits of the new technologies that save water and keep awareness going.

**CG:** What about water restrictions and higher water rates?

**Kaufhold:** We are going to pay more and it’s inevitable. Those increases will push people to conserve. But we have other concerns to address like preserving the urban forests. Ideally, I would prefer that the industry police itself rather than have mandated restrictions – but that may not be possible. As an industry we need to be involved with water providers and other decision makers to promote options that lead to responsible water use – including restrictions. 

All of Colorado’s water flows out. We are a use it or lose it state.



Photo courtesy Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District

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# Brad Petschek: Water, drought and conservation

**B**rad Petschek, is one of the regulars you'll see at the irrigation supply houses in and around Fort Collins. And ever since he earned the Landscape Industry Certified Technician designation in 1993, he's also one of the regulars you'll see each year at ALCC's certification test where he evaluates candidates on their way to earning certification in the irrigation module. Other than that, Petschek keeps a pretty low industry profile.

Since founding **Alpenglow Sprinkler & Landscaping, Inc.** Fort Collins, in 1985, Petschek has been a hands-on guy busy growing his business. For 30 years, his time has been devoted to designing and installing irrigation systems, selling retrofits, helping clients qualify for rebates, and doing blowouts in the fall and activations in the spring. His primary goal from the start, says Petschek, has been to conserve water through efficient water use, professional design, quality components and superior craftsmanship. He lives and breathes irrigation, has the certifications to prove it – CLT, CLIA, CID, CIC, CLWM, and is an outspoken advocate of water conservation.

In the following interview, Petschek offers his take on the California drought and the lessons he believes it offers to Colorado's green industry.

**CG: Have you been in California recently?**

**Petschek:** I was in the Los Angeles area this summer and I was astonished at the wastage of water in this super-arid state. The inefficiencies I saw have me totally baffled! Perhaps it's the lack of money that prevents these homeowners from upgrading their systems to more efficient ones, but I tend to believe it is mostly just ignorance of the newer and more effective products on the market today, and the perception that an upgrade may be too expensive.

I saw many new Beemers, Porsches and Mercedes parked in driveways of mostly somewhat modest homes, but the sprinkler components of most all of these homes date back to the seventies and eighties.

## The drought of 2002-2003 taught us many things, some scientific and some business-wise.

**CG: What about plant material?**

**Petschek:** The most disconcerting aspect was that many of the xeric landscapes are being watered as if they were turf. Most of the ground was completely bare dirt with no mulch to hold in the moisture and very few plants. And to top it off, many of these systems throw water well into the street.

The problem is not the amount of lawns – but the inability to promote efficient water use in the landscape in general.

**CG: Do you think there are business opportunities for landscape companies during drought?**

**Petschek:** Of course there will always be sales opportunities with every weather phenomenon, including drought. Exactly who the benefactors will be will depend on one's business savvy as well as the intensity and extent of the drought.

A drought as severe as what California is currently experiencing is truly beneficial to very few. It might very well change the landscape (pardon the pun) of the California green industry and could easily affect the green industry nationwide. Our job as stewards of this valuable resource is to attempt to conserve water whenever possible and help implement plans for when the drought hits Colorado next.



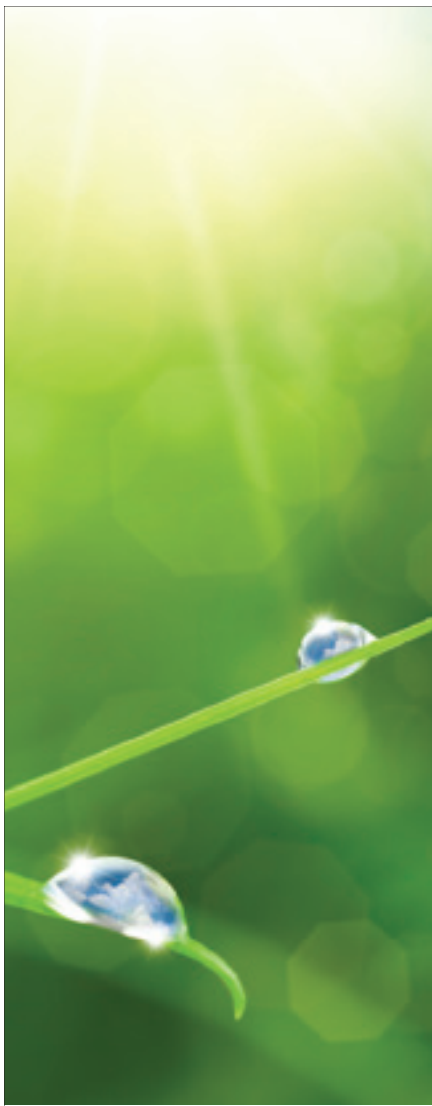
Photo courtesy Christine Kraff

Brad Petschek



Photo courtesy Brad Petschek

Petschek found this vine with no supplemental water manages to bloom and add life and color to a Southern California city



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**CG:** Your company survived the last big drought of 2002-2003 – and some before that. What were your biggest lessons learned?

**Petschek:** The drought of 2002-2003 taught us many things, some scientific and some business-wise. We learned of the ability of a bluegrass lawn to bounce back after a year or two of going fallow. Some of us took the opportunity to up-sell water-conserving sprinkler components.

Or in times of too much precipitation, such as this May, rain and soil moisture sensors tend to be an easy sell. But if you imagine the drought extending for four years or longer, as it has in California, then the business opportunities seem much more limited.

**CG:** Based on the California experience, what should Colorado's green industry be doing in anticipation of our next drought?

**Petschek:** As members of the green industry, our livelihoods are at stake here. We should be preparing for the eventuality of extreme drought through proper planning and legislative action. Positioning one's company as a water-conserving contractor has to be a positive thing in this day of water scarcities, and maintaining the highest standards of design and construction certainly minimizes waste.

A lot of this conservation effort rests on the heels of the government and water providers, as they are in essence the purveyors of water. The State of California finally announced in April that watering restrictions were being imposed on its citizens statewide in an attempt to conserve water. We may not have heard of the intermediate steps that led up to this announcement, but to this distant on-looker, this step seems a little too small and way too late. Why water rationing wasn't one of the main stories out of California over the past three years is beyond me.

The drought that California is presently experiencing is getting Coloradans talking, all right. Let's hope it's enough to get Coloradans motivated into action as well.

**CG:** What about government regulations and water restrictions?

**Petschek:** Allowing the government to set minimum standards for water conservation in landscape design and construction seems only logical, although a tough pill for many of us in the industry to swallow.

We should also be involved in a civic and political sense. Why rainwater harvesting failed to pass the Colorado legislature recently shows me the situation hasn't reached bleak enough proportions to prompt people to action. We should be writing our senators and congress people to inform them of our opinions on important issues such as this. This may seem like a small stumbling block, but every step towards conservation, no matter how small, helps. Imagine how many rain barrels we could have filled this spring with virtually no ill effects.


Rain collection irrigation systems for residential lawns or gardens are gaining popularity in parts of Europe. Why are they not here, where our access to fresh water is profoundly more limited? Of course this is due to the water laws of Colorado that were written in the 1800's. I propose its time to rewrite these water laws to more accurately address the issues of water scarcity we are experiencing in the 21st century!

## Allowing the government to set minimum standards for water conservation in landscape design and construction seems only logical, although a tough pill for many of us in the industry to swallow.

**CG:** How do you see Colorado's landscapes changing?

**Petschek:** Our current reliance on large areas of turf needs to change as we accept more water-conserving types of landscapes. There should be a bigger and ongoing push toward less water-intensive native landscapes, and an intolerance of the tendency to "rock everything in." In addition, monocultures of any one species are to be avoided to minimize the effects of widespread disease, as the Emerald Ash Borer and Mountain Pine Beetle infestations are beginning to teach us.

And why should we wait for monies to somehow miraculously appear to fund untreated water supply systems for landscape use, especially along the Front Range, when we could fund these projects if municipalities simply doubled or tripled their water rates right now? This acts as a water conservation measure as well. Imagine the cost of treating thousands of acre feet of water for watering lawns as this state doubles in size in the next 30 years! Every street and/or water project ought to include the laying of purple (non-potable) irrigation pipe.

Conserving water is a step forward, but we need to implement legislation, projects and strategies that will help us all endure Colorado's next extreme drought without too much sacrifice. Even as the rains of this past spring seemed relentless, there's no better time to get serious about this issue than right now. 

# Targeting turf in Southern California

Cash for grass has been more effective than volunteer efforts to save water

By Becky Garber

Four years of sustained drought in California have led the governor to plead both with residents to let their lawns die, and water providers to offer aggressive rebates to residents who will rip out their lawns and replace them with more “California friendly” landscapes.

California’s Governor Jerry Brown has voiced his disappointment in the failure of Californians in general to get on board with conservation when the state is in its fourth year of extreme drought. While he called upon citizens to reduce water consumption by 25 percent, the decrease since June 2014 was less than 10 percent statewide. In spring 2015, the state’s Water Conservation Control Board approved rules forcing cities to limit watering of public property and encouraged residents to let their lawns die. The governor also called for voluntary removal of 50 million square feet of turf across the state.

What the governor’s pleas could not accomplish, however, the incentives of a large water provider apparently can. Being offered cash for their grass has many Southern California residents willing to rip out lawns and renovate their landscapes.

In parts of Southern California, up to 5,000 residential lawns are vanishing each month via the rebate program known as the SoCal WaterSmart Turf Removal Program. Dubbed the nation’s largest turf removal and water conservation program, it is offered by the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) of Southern California which provides water to more than 17 million people in 26 cities. Drought applications in Orange County which had averaged only 10 per month during 2014 soared to 1,450 per month by April 2015.

The rebate program had to stop processing applications in early May of this year because MWD ran out of its \$100 million in approved funding. By the end of May, however, the budget was increased by another \$350 million – more than 3 times the initial investment - to keep the momentum for lawn removals rolling.

Who’s buying in? The majority of participants are middle class residents. Unlike the affluent who can and will likely be willing to pay large sums to water expansive estates, the middle class seem to be best positioned to value the cost savings of the program over time even as they take advantage of the rebates now.

## ROI is long term

MWD believes the long-term cost savings of the \$450 million rebate investment are worth it. According to Jeffrey Knightlinger, MWD general manager, quoted in the Orange County Register, “We really want people to shift how they think about outdoor water usage, their garden and their lifestyle in Southern California.” MWD projects that removal of turf and the ensuing water conservation will save more than 70 million gallons of water per day which over a decade is enough to fill California’s largest reservoir.

We really want people to shift how they think about outdoor water usage.

## The new look of SoCal landscapes

For properties to be eligible for the turf removal rebate they must have a minimum of 250 square feet of lawn and replace the existing lawns with a new landscape that does not include live turf – or any turf-looking plants, even though they may be drought tolerant. Qualified renovations must include plants and all materials must be permeable to air and water. Concrete, structures and other surfaces that water and air cannot move through are disqualified. Residents must also check with other local agencies to see if synthetic turf is permitted in their area before seeking a rebate for artificial turf.

While MWD does not provide a sanctioned plant list, the program points citizens to tips for creating a “California friendly” landscape and also promotes the use of rain barrels for further conservation.

Rebates are also available for weather-based irrigation controllers that are EPA WaterSense



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### Opportunity knocks for some


While companies built solely around lawn maintenance have been hurt by lawn removals, the situation has opened doors for others. Turf Terminators is one example of a Southern California company capitalizing on the opportunity. They have reportedly been busy converting 1,200 yards per month from turf to other plants. Their conversion program also includes installation of desiganted controllers and drip irrigation.

Turf Terminators does the work for free in exchange for the homeowner's rebate and even processes the paperwork to ensure payment. They credit a high profile in neighborhoods where they work and word-of-mouth referrals for building their business.

Because synthetic turf is allowed in some areas, that industry has also found opportunity amidst cash for grass to promote a product that requires "no watering and therefore saves hundreds of thousands of dollars in increasing water bills." Specifically, distributors market that for every square foot of artificial turf installed, 55 gallons of water are saved per year or 13,750 gallons per year for a 250 sq. ft. area.

In addition to conserving water, artificial turf, according to its distributors, brings other environmental benefits such as reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides and fewer emissions in the atmosphere through the elimination of mowing equipment. While some may challenge whether this manufactured product is truly sustainable, it has been approved by some municipalities and other regulating entities as a legitimate turf alternative and could become a mainstay within the new California landscape.

### The Southern California snapshot

The 26 cities in six counties served by MWD account for nearly 45 percent of California's population. While the area may not be representative of all of California, the success of MWD's incentivized program that has moved countless people to let go of their traditional lawns, is remarkable. Crisis and rewards for making changes that serve the common good appear to have been effective at least for the short term visible in this recent snapshot. 

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# Drought: Pain or profit?

Photo courtesy ALCC

## Poll reveals what companies think

The majority of owners and managers of Colorado landscape companies believe drought positions their companies more for profit than for pain according to a poll earlier this season by Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. In this poll, 85% of responding companies statewide said their businesses would not be hurt by drought – whenever it comes.

Optimism ranged from an enthusiastic, “I am SO going to profit off of drought!” to an optimistic, “We were fine in the last drought, and expect that with our reputation for Xeriscaping, we would do well in the next drought.”

Another 2002 drought survivor stated, “We grew during those years . . . installing xeric options. Fast forward to the next drought cycle, we will do this again and much more of it.” One company owner pointed out the creative tension inherent in drought: “Drought is both an opportunity and a risk . . . risk for those companies that are slow to adapt – and opportunity for those able to adjust.”

**When asked if customers are influenced by the California drought and talking about it,** roughly 50% said customers are talking only minimally about drought and its future impact upon our state. One spoke for most when stating “Customers only care if WE are in the drought.” Another owner of a design/build firm wrote that those “customers who do understand the need for and value of water conserving landscapes are often former Californians!”

### Are you doing anything to raise drought awareness?

In spite of seeing little consumer concern, 78% of respondents said they are actively working to raise conservation awareness among clients. They are doing this by promoting better water conservation choices in design, irrigation components whether new projects or retrofits, Smart controllers, xeric plants and elimination of non-essential turf areas. One stated, “Drip irrigation and well-designed irrigation systems are key.” Said another, “We talk to each of our clients when we are on their properties about water conserving upgrades.”

### Do companies want more regulation related to water?

Many respondents favored legislation and/or regulations from water providers that would drive consumers to become more conservation minded. Said one, we need to “foster relationships with those who manage the water distribution system so that any restrictions are grounded in reason and function for the good of the landscapes – and not just for easy management of the water system. Promote need based watering rather than every third day watering, for example.”

“Allowing the government to set minimum standards for water conservation in landscape design and construction seems only logical – although a tough pill for many of us in the industry to swallow,” said another.

### Poll echoes findings of *Fortune* magazine

The position of ALCC’s members about the opportunities arising from drought are consistent with *Fortune* magazine’s drought

assessment published earlier this season in articles related to the California drought. The green industry, says *Fortune*, is among the 9 industries that stand to profit most from drought. 🌱

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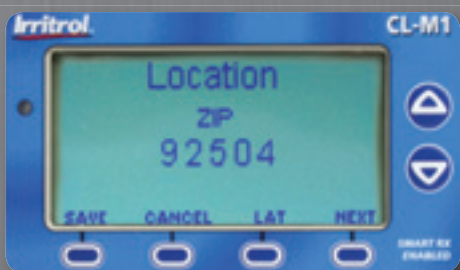
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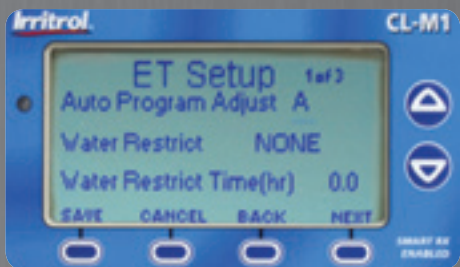
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—Contributed by Pat Hayward, executive director, Plant Select®

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**Form:** ground-covering shrub

**Light:** full sun to part shade

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