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A message from President Ryan Coyle



Dear Members of the Indianapolis Landscape Association,

As we look ahead to the spring season of 2026, I am both honored and excited to step into the role of President of the Indianapolis Landscape Association. After serving on the Board for more than ten years, I am proud of the work we have accomplished together and grateful for the opportunity to now help lead this organization into its next chapter.

Over the past decade, I have seen firsthand the strength of our membership, the passion within our industry, and the impact we can make when we work together. As President, my goal is to build on that foundation by inspiring continued growth, collaboration, and service. I look forward to leading this group to do great things—not only by advancing our profession in the green industry, but by being a positive influence within our industry and our community.

A key focus moving forward will be learning, mentoring, and giving back. Whether it is supporting the next generation of landscape professionals, sharing knowledge and best practices among our members, or providing charitable support to those in need, we have an opportunity to make a meaningful difference. I

believe our association can be a model for how an industry comes together to do good while continuing to raise the standard of excellence.

We are off to a strong start this season. We recently wrapped up our first event of the year, the Annual Garden Party at the Indiana Flower and Patio Show, and it was a tremendous success. The committee did a fantastic job, and the event saw the largest attendance in years—if not ever—and certainly the largest since COVID. Congratulations to all of the winners as well, and thank you to everyone who contributed their time and energy to make the event such a success.

As we move into the busy spring season, I encourage each of you to stay engaged, get involved, and support one another. Together, we can continue to strengthen our association, elevate our industry, and make a positive impact both professionally and personally.

Thank you for your trust, your commitment, and your continued support. I look forward to an exciting and successful year ahead.

Sincerely,

Ryan Coyle,
**Vive Exterior Design/Artisan Outdoor
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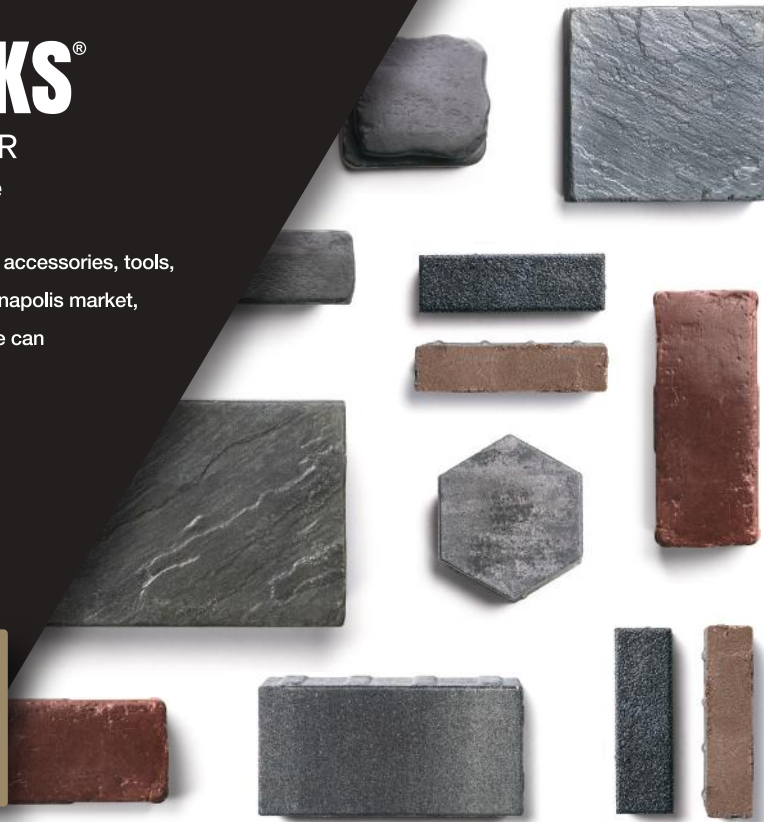
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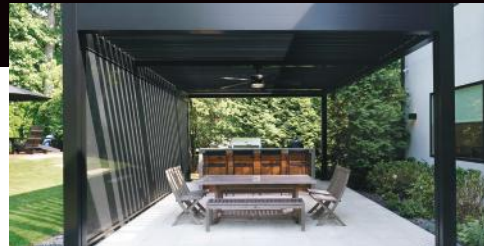


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ILA Garden Party Draws Record Crowd at Indiana Flower & Patio Show

The Indianapolis Landscape Association once again hosted a standout evening at the Indiana Flower & Patio Show with its annual Garden Party—an event that continues to grow in both energy and attendance each year.

This year’s Garden Party took on a relaxed “Happy Hour” atmosphere, giving ILA members and guests the opportunity to unwind with drinks and light hors d’oeuvres while connecting with peers from across the industry. More than just a social gathering, the evening offered a chance to experience the creativity and craftsmanship of fellow members by exploring the stunning display gardens constructed throughout the show.

From innovative hardscape designs to vibrant plant combinations and immersive outdoor living spaces, the gardens served as a true showcase of the talent within the ILA community.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Events like the Garden Party are made possible through the generous support of our sponsors. We extend our sincere appreciation to the following companies for their contributions:

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A special thank you as well to **MarketPlace Events**, and to Tammy and Bill, for their continued partnership in making the Indiana Flower & Patio Show—and the Garden Party—a success.

Recognizing Our Contributing Landscapers

The heart of the Garden Party lies in the incredible work of the ILA member companies who design and build the gardens each year. We are proud to recognize the following contributing landscapers:

Emerald Meadows
 All Pro Landscape
 Primary Grounds
 Sugar Creek
 Start to Finish
 Plant Studio
 Hamilton County Lawn & Landscape
 Seacat Landscaping
 Franklin Brothers
 Moran Outdoor
 Turner Scapes
 JMT Landscape Group

We were especially excited to welcome several **new ILA members** who participated this year:

Sunnyside Landscapes
 Rusted Kreations Flowers
 R&R Outdoors
 B&F Landscaping

Their involvement added fresh perspective and creativity to an already impressive lineup of gardens.

Celebrating Excellence

As part of the evening, attending ILA members had the opportunity to vote for the prestigious **ILA Garden of Excellence Award**. This year’s honor was awarded to **Primary Grounds**, whose garden stood out for its exceptional design and execution.

In addition, several awards were presented by MarketPlace Events to recognize outstanding achievements within the show:

Best Landscape Design: Franklin Brothers Landscape
People's Choice Award: Turner Scapes
Best Use of Color: Turner Scapes
Best Water Feature: Start to Finish Landscaping
Best Plant Palette: Primary Grounds
Best Use of Multiple Materials: JMT Landscape Group

A Night to Remember

With its largest attendance in years, this year's Garden Party was a clear reflection of the strength and camaraderie within the ILA community. It was an evening filled with great conversation, inspiration, and celebration of the craftsmanship that defines our industry.

We thank everyone who attended, participated, and supported the event—and we look forward to seeing you at the next ILA member gathering.

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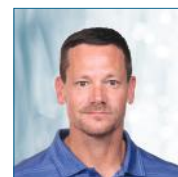
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2026 FLOWER AND PATIO SHOW AWARDS



Best Landscape Design: Franklin Brothers Landscape



Garden of Excellence: Primary Grounds



Best Use of Multiple Materials: JMT Landscape Group



People's Choice Award/Use of Color: Turner Scapes



Best Water Feature: Start to Finish Landscaping



Best Plant Palette: Primary Grounds

The Changing Landscape: Private Equity’s Growing Roots in Indiana

By Dan Wasson
Newsleaf Committee Chair

As we gear up for another busy spring season here in the Indianapolis area, it is impossible to ignore a major shift taking place within our industry. For years, we have watched large-scale consolidation happen in other markets. On a national level, heavy hitters like the Mariani Premier Group have been aggressively expanding, acquiring over two dozen premium landscaping companies across the country. Now, this wave of private equity investment has officially arrived in our own backyard.

Over the past several months, local landscaping companies have increasingly become the target of private equity acquisitions. A notable driver of this local trend is CID Capital, an Indianapolis-based private equity firm. In September 2025, CID Capital made a major splash by partnering with Hittle Landscaping, a Westfield-headquartered company that has served the Indianapolis metro area for more than 50 years. CID Capital recognized the value in Hittle’s deep roots, culture of service, and dedicated team, utilizing them as their second major commercial landscaping platform.



The investments didn’t stop there. Just recently, in early 2026, Hittle Landscaping acquired two other familiar local businesses: Wesley’s Landscape & Lawncare and Calvin Landscape. Many of you are well-acquainted with owners Wesley Addington, who proudly served as a board member and past president on our own ILA Board of Directors, and Jim Calvin, who also

served as a board member and past president of the ILA. These acquisitions allow Hittle to strengthen its presence in Hamilton County and add valuable capacity in maintenance, landscape construction, and turf care.

To get a firsthand perspective on this transition, I recently spoke with Addington about his experience going through the acquisition process. He candidly described the sale as an “emotional rollercoaster.”

When you grow up in the industry, he noted, you have to be prepared to put a dollar amount on your life’s work—a reality that brought out unexpected emotions regarding both his business and the landscaping industry as a whole.



Ultimately, Addington’s biggest reason for selling was that the “financial side made sense, and [he] didn’t want to miss the bus.” He also discovered unexpected benefits post-acquisition, particularly the new avenues for career advancement now available to his employees. Today, Addington continues to work “for the love of the game,” realizing that being in the business is incredibly fun even when you no longer have to do it.

For other local owners, Addington offers some valuable advice: “Go through the process, even if you are not interested. At least you know what your strengths are.” He emphasizes that private equity isn’t just targeting commercial operations anymore; residential businesses are now firmly on the table. Finally, he stresses that business owners must understand their numbers, noting that EBITDA is the “final dictator of worth,” and operators need to know how to make it work in their favor.

CID Capital is not the only private equity-backed player expanding its footprint in our market. Schill Grounds Management, backed by a majority investment from Argonne Capital Group, has also pushed into the

Indianapolis area as part of a strategic plan to consolidate the commercial landscaping industry. Schill made its move by acquiring BAM Outdoor, a locally owned commercial landscaping and snow removal company known for serving Westfield, Carmel, Fishers, and Noblesville. With former BAM owners Jeff Kontor, Jared Winn, and Michael Linton staying on to help lead the integration and grow the business, this acquisition highlights a common private equity strategy: retaining local entrepreneurial expertise while providing national-level corporate resources.

In addition, other acquisitions, such as Townsend moving beyond arboriculture and tree services by acquiring Landscapes Unlimited and Accent Landscapes in recent years, have taken place. Also, the Mariani Premier Group has reportedly made some moves in the Indianapolis market.

What does this mean for ILA members?

First, it validates the incredible hard work and value that our local green industry professionals have built over

decades. Private equity firms are looking for well-run, profitable businesses with strong community ties and recurring revenue. For owners considering their long-term exit strategies or succession plans, the influx of capital into our market presents lucrative new opportunities.

On the other hand, it also means the competitive landscape is shifting. Competing against well-funded, consolidated entities will require independent operators to lean into what they do best: building authentic local relationships, delivering exceptional customer service, and retaining top-tier talent.

As we head into the thick of the 2026 season, keeping an eye on these market trends is just as important as prepping our equipment and crews. Whether your goal is to grow your business for a future sale or to remain a strong, independent cornerstone of the Indianapolis market, there has never been a more exciting time to be a part of the local green industry. Have a great spring season!



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From the Bobcat to the Boardroom: The Weight of the CEO

By Dan Wasson
Newsleaf Committee Chair

There is a photo I cherish of myself when I was one year old. In it, I'm "helping" my dad on a landscape crew. My father started Wasson Nursery in 1977 with a shoestring budget, a couple of employees, and a dream. Looking at that photo, I jokingly tell people I've been in the landscaping business my entire life. "it's a great sales pitch... gets people laughing and it's the truth!"

But lately, I've been thinking about what that lifespan actually means.

I grew up on the crew. I know the grit of a twelve-hour day in the Indiana heat. I know (and love) the smell of mulch and the vibrating hum of a Bobcat after a long day. For a long time, I thought that was the hard part. I thought the physical toll was the price you paid for success. I was wrong.

Building the company is much harder than building the landscape.

The Shift in Perspective

There are days now, sitting behind a desk or in meetings, where I find myself looking out the window and wishing I was back on that crew. On the crew, the hurdles are tangible: a broken irrigation line, a late stone delivery, or a sudden downpour. You solve the problem with your hands, you finish the job, and you see the result. There is a simplicity in that labor that I didn't realize was actually the "easy" part.

As CEO, the hurdles are no longer made of dirt and stone. They are made of strategy, culture, and people.

What does CEO mean: Removing Hurdles

I've realized that my primary role has shifted from being the best landscaper (I say this jokingly) to being the best "hurdle remover" for my staff. If my team is stuck, if their vision is clouded, or if they don't have the tools they need to excel, that is a failure on my part.

Directing the company vision is a heavy mantle. It's no longer about where the trees go in a single



backyard; it's about where 100+ employees are headed over the next decade.

The Paradox of People

The most paramount—and undeniably the most stressful—part of this role is putting people in the right places. A landscape company is only as strong as its culture. Finding the right talent, nurturing it, and ensuring everyone is in a position where they can thrive is a constant puzzle.

When you're on a crew, you're responsible for your shovel, how good your bed edges are etc.... When you're the CEO, you're responsible for the person holding the shovel, their family's livelihood, and the future of the brand your father built nearly 50 years ago.

Final Thoughts

To my fellow ILA members and business owners: don't get me wrong, I love what we've built. But I've learned to have a profound respect for the "easy" days of spreading mulch.

If you see me out on a job site staring longingly at a skid steer, now you know why. I'm just a guy who grew up on a crew, still trying to make sure the path is clear for the next generation to do the same.

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Raising the Standard: Open-Graded Bases for Residential Pavers

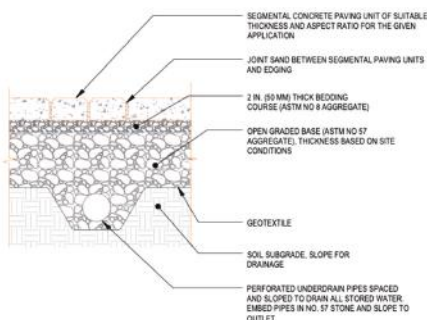
As we head into the spring season, many of us are refining our installation techniques to ensure we deliver the highest quality, most resilient hardscapes to our clients. A recent technical update from the Concrete Masonry & Hardscapes Association (CMHA) regarding the use of open-graded aggregate (OGA) bases for standard interlocking concrete pavers (ICP) offers a significant shift in industry standards.

Validating Field Experience

It is important to acknowledge that many contractors and landscapers in our community have been successfully utilizing OGA base techniques for quite some time, relying on years of field experience and site-specific adaptations. While this CMHA update provides formal, research-backed guidance, the real significance is that the CMHA is now officially recognizing and accepting this method for specific residential applications. It is a major step forward to see industry standards catching up to the successful, time-tested practices many of you have already been implementing in the field.

Technical Overview

This hybrid system combines the base and bedding of a permeable pavement with a standard sand-set surface layer.



Key Components per CMHA Guidelines:

- **Surface:** Segmental concrete paving units with sand-filled joints.
- **Bedding Course:** 2 in. (50 mm) thick ASTM No. 8 aggregate.
- **Base:** Open-graded ASTM No. 57 aggregate (thickness based on site conditions).

- **Separation:** Geotextile fabric installed along the bottom and sides to prevent soil migration into the base.
- **Drainage:** Perforated underdrain pipes embedded in No. 57 stone, sloped to an outlet.

Benefits and Limitations

Research concluded in 2025 has clarified the advantages of this system for residential pedestrian projects (patios, walkways, and pool decks):

- **Improved Performance:** The system has the potential to reduce frost heave during our Indiana winters.
- **Efficiency:** It can minimize delays caused by wet or cold weather during the construction process.
- **Scope:** Note that this is not for commercial or vehicular applications.

Critical Best Practices

To ensure long-term performance, consider these key requirements:

- **Jointing:** Use ASTM C144 mason sand or polymeric sand. ASTM C33 concrete sand is an option but is more difficult to work into the joints.
- **Compaction:** OGA must be compacted to prevent future settlement, confirmed by a lightweight deflectometer aiming for an average maximum deflection of 0.6 mm.
- **Maintenance:** Because joint sand will naturally migrate into the OGA base, instruct clients to monitor for sand loss and replenish when it exceeds 1/2 in. (12 mm).

For the full technical details, I encourage everyone to review the PAV-FAQ-002 document at masonryandhardscapes.org. A site-specific approach is the hallmark of a professional installer—let's make this our most resilient season yet.

Van Buren Elm



Consulting Arborist Corner

Judson R. Scott

Registered Consulting Arborist



Today U.S. 40 is a main thoroughfare through Plainfield, Indiana but in its origin it was the known as "The National Road" which was one of the United States first "improved" roads. Improvement was slow along the road with many sections, just a dirt road or during wet periods, a muddy slough.

During his Presidency Martin Van Buren vetoed a bill calling for maintenance upgrades to the National Road. This Veto may have led to a historic stop for him in Plainfield in 1842. Having lost his re-election bid in the 1840 election, Van Buren was on a stagecoach tour in effort to test the waters for a re-election campaign. While traveling through Plainfield, tradition has it that the stage that the President was riding in struck a large elm root which was in the roadway causing the stagecoach to tip, dumping the President into a large mud puddle at the foot of a majestic Elm.

There is some thought that this "accident" was part of a plot by his political adversaries, one account even suggesting that the axle was cut most of the way through. But the best account is the local tradition that residents paid the stage driver Mason Wright with a silk hat, to "dump" President Van Buren, because he had vetoed the bill that would

have provided funds for highway maintenance. This thought is supported by relatives of Wright and by the fact that there was a crowd on hand for the event.[1]

The majestic elm was forever after called "The Van Buren Elm" and when it died a new elm was planted and a stone erected by the local Chapter of the Daughter's of the American Revolution to memorialize the event and the tree.

1. Reference Note: Information gleaned from Indiana: A Guide to the Hoosier State, By Federal Writers' Project, Oxford Press 1941

The "Trees in History" series provided by Jud Scott, who is a lover of trees and history. If you need help preserving a tree or resolving a tree conflict, Jud can be reached at 317-815-8733 or by email at Jud@arboristexpert.com. homeowners concerning their trees and landscapes. Jud can be reached at 317-815-8733 or by email at Jud@arboristexpert.com. Website www.arboristexpert.com

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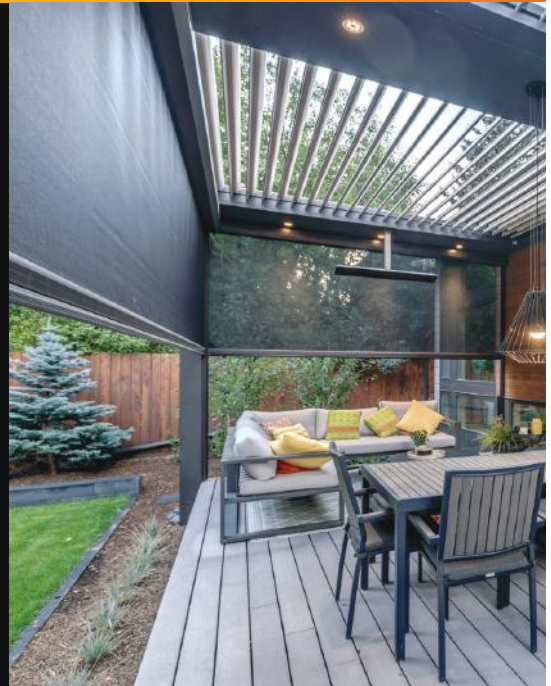
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