

# Valpak Industry Bulletin

## Lawn and garden increasing organic and alternative solutions sales

While overall lawn and garden sales have slowed, statistics show that consumers have turned to alternative lawn and garden concepts and organic products in greater numbers. Packaged Facts, a market research firm, estimates that the organic niche has risen at double-digit rates in the range of 12% to 14% over the last five years.

“The entire landscape of the U.S. lawn and garden environment is changing rapidly as both consumer attitudes and EPA regulations shift towards a more eco-friendly market,” said Tatjana Meerman, managing editor of Packaged Facts.

The deterioration of normal weather patterns, and stricter regulations are just a few factors that have affected consumers’ ability to maintain and upgrade their lawns and gardens.

Especially in drought-stricken areas, some are looking to alternative sources like wells. It used to be almost unheard of for people who are served by public water systems to dig wells in their yards. But as watering restrictions tighten, private irrigation wells are becoming more common, especially in upscale neighborhoods, according to a recent National Public Radio report. In Wake County, North Carolina, local well driller Jason Poole said his company has

installed dozens of private wells since the town’s drought began and says he has “a whole stack” of wells left to drill.

And it’s certain that these changes aren’t limited to the South.

Through the years, Maryland’s landscape contractors have learned to cope with trying conditions such as drought, housing slumps and high fuel costs, says Vanessa Finney, Executive Director of the Maryland Nursery and Landscape Association.

Many landscape contractors have relied more on xeriscaping (planting varieties that tolerate dry conditions) as well as adding more native plants and perennials in garden settings. Others have turned to providing “hardscaping” services for patios and other garden structures, especially for high-end homeowners, Finney said. Despite the housing slowdown, homeowners continue to pay for professional landscaping because when the market eventually picks up, the investment will pay off, she added.

Similarly, in Lincoln, Rhode Island, statistics show that in water-restricted regions, companies are installing 15 percent more drip irrigation systems and 12 percent more smart products.



Some companies have converted almost exclusively to lawn and garden maintenance services. Others are even making sure their lawn mowers are tuned up to trim fuel expenses.

According to a new national poll released by the Renewable Fuels Now Coalition, 74% of Americans believe we should increase our use of domestically-produced renewable fuels like ethanol.

Companies like John Deere have begun to recommend and factory-fill biodiesel in their engines. Biodiesel is a renewable, oxygenated fuel made from agricultural resources such as soybeans or rapeseeds. It is biodegradable and free of sulfur.

“Use of biofuels in John Deere diesel engines is the right thing to do from a long-term economic and environmental standpoint,” said Brian Brown, manager of worldwide marketing support at John Deere Power.

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