

Get to Know Kyle Lukes

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter "T". A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is positioned above the letter "i" in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word "Services".The logo for DesignBuild, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and the word "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is positioned above the letter "i" in "Design". A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word "Build".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the word.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

Kyle Lukes represents the new millennial breed of landscape architect steeped in electronic imaging and formulations including blog posts, Pinterest and Flipboards combined with old-fashioned print inspirations, personal site visits and training conferences. Another millennial stand-out is his global and environmental sway on all projects he tackles. For nearly a decade Lukes has moved up the ranks at Akron, Ohio-based [Environmental Design Group](#) (formerly Floyd Browne Group) from land planner to landscape architect.

Lukes earned his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. He is an avid outdoorsman whose exploits include gardening, farming, railroading, hiking and biking with his wife, Tamara, and 4-year-old daughter, Audrianna, along the Towpath Trail. Lukes has an affinity for the trail, serving as an associate board member of the Ohio and Erie Canalway Coalition, comprised of young professionals working on various volunteer and trail improvement projects along this historic recreational artery of Northeast Ohio.

Year company was founded: 1984

Business motto: Every project has the potential to create a positive impact on the communities we serve.

Proudest moment in the landscape business: I find pride in solving client's stresses and problems. When I can creatively problem solve, and the project is built on time and within budget, I'm always happiest. The Boettler Park Mitigation Wetland restoration project in Green, Ohio, was and continues to be a very proud moment for me. Our client, the Akron Canton Regional Airport, was required to clear habitat for aviation safety. This clearing impacted wetlands, and the airport was required to compensate for these impacts by creating new wetlands elsewhere. Boettler Park was chosen since it was in the same community and watershed as the airport and provided a wonderful native

landscape addition to the park. Eleven acres of wetland, upland meadow and woodland buffer were restored at the park with more than 32,500 trees and shrubs planted.



The Bridgestone Technical Center includes a rain garden

Biggest business challenge: Getting my clients to see beyond their project scope. If a client says they want to build a trail, a parking lot or a park, I'm thinking beyond that and trying to integrate a more global perspective so the project site will make the best impact. I take a deeper dive into their current issues to tease out the greatest project potential, and by doing this, I'm able to assist my clients in looking at the project from a different perspective.

By example, when we go through a cost benefit analysis on a project that doesn't necessarily have green infrastructure or stormwater management practices built in, our team will take their ideas and plans and maximize their value beyond what they initially thought because we know that, eventually, a stormwater management plan will need to be addressed, and if we can attempt to build that in during project inception, we're saving our client's money, time and resources.

Best sources of landscape design/build inspiration: As a millennial, I see how our generational workforce is becoming the future of business, and we're changing that landscape (pun is intended!). From the myriad of applications like Pinterest and FlipBoard that provide great inspiration for innovative design, the internet makes finding inspiration a lot easier. I balance the internet against magazines, trade publications, site visits (even on vacations), conferences and training, as well as blog posts and white papers to find my inspiration. Of course, I also rely on my coworkers, and I don't limit myself. I find that diversified viewpoints bring a lot of success to my job.

Ian McHarg was one of the first landscape architects that began to graphically show the system think of design, and I must respect and admire how he began to revolutionize our industry. Piet Oudolf is another great inspiration by using a naturalistic approach and prioritizing the seasonal cycles of a plant over a decorative flower.



Kyle Lukes is also proud of the work he did for the Boettler Park Mitigation Wetland restoration

Favorite plant or plant combination: My favorite plant combination is fastened to a four-season interest because I believe landscape plants are the skin to any project. Yellow twig dogwood is a great plant for all four seasons, and I use it often in my designs because the bright yellow stems on the younger growth provide striking winter color. White spring flowers are followed by white fruit, and it thrives in moist situations and does well in most Ohio weather.

Monday morning motivation: My daughter waking me up before my alarm goes off

saying, "It's morning time, Daddy. Time to get up!" What more could you want? But beyond that, the diversity of the projects I get to work on, and the problems I get to solve brings me a lot of satisfaction, which makes Mondays a little more manageable.

Business worry that keeps me up most at night: Trying to balance what I'd like to invest in a project and the ability to provide what's realistic for the client. For me, every single project is important, and I always want to do more, but time and budget sometimes limits how far I can take it. When trying to balance all the elements of good landscape design, I always strive to deliver the project on time and within budget.

Landscape design mentor: Peter Bain, who is a permaculture specialist, develops agricultural systems based on natural, ecological principles. These systems are designed to be resistant and self-sufficient. He can approach landscape design from a totally different perspective than how I was trained. While he's not a landscape architect, he understands how natural systems work, and he builds his vision into a work of balanced composition. His ideas of sustainable human elements synthesized from agriculture, ecology and forestry create solutions that are applicable in the landscape industry.



Japanese garden

Favorite business book: "The Restoration Economy" by Storm Cunningham was a pretty impactful read because he talks about the emergence of the restorative development and details how our world is demonstrating how restoration is making residential, commercial and public space more healthy and friendly. I'm a big believer in this.

Landscape design/install project that makes you smile every time you drive past it: The Bridgestone Technical Center of North America in Akron, Ohio, was very impactful for me because the project preserved and enhanced the natural character of the site and was executed in a way that allowed me to work directly with the contractor. I designed a Japanesestyle garden, which fit perfectly into the building aesthetics. The whole project was executed in a way that embraced the Bridgestone Corporations "One Team, One Planet" philosophy of sustainability, and it fit perfectly into my vision of thoughtful and environmentally conscious design.

Where do you see yourself in five years? I hope to be doing the same thing I'm doing now because I love what I do. I haven't thought into the future, but if I can continue to work on projects that have a positive impact on people, places and the environment, I'll be happy.

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