

Virtual Reality: One Of Many New Technologies Reshaping Landscape Industry

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 at the bottom 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, black, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the word "Services".The logo for Turf Design Build, featuring the word "Turf" in a small, orange, sans-serif font above the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font. The word "Build" is in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top 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 at the top right of the word.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com



Photo: Ronnie Hall

The recent [GIE+EXPO](#) at the massive Kentucky Exposition Center was a killer. It shattered all records – exhibitors, attendees, educational sessions, you name it. I’ve never been a part of anything like it, and I’ve attended more than 25 EXPOs, probably closer to 30. (But, who’s counting, right?)

Leg-weary and my head spinning from the latest Louisville experience, it took me two days to recover. But that’s beside the point. Let’s get to the good stuff, the largest array of labor-saving and moneymaking innovations I’ve ever seen over the course of several days in one place.

Suppliers – buoyed by the landscape industry’s seven years of solid growth and competing in an environment every bit as heated as ours – are challenging their creative teams and engineers to explore new technologies, come up with new products and to upgrade product categories we already trust and use.

Friends, we’re on the vanguard of industry-changing technologies that will

bring us more innovation to marking, selling and delivering our services over the next five years than we've experienced in the past 25 years.

But rather than blasting you with a fire hose of all of the neat, new stuff displayed at the EXPO (for now anyway) let's start with just a single technology: virtual reality (VR). We knew it was coming. We've seen it on television and some of us have even experienced it at a theme park or even in our living rooms. Now it's available and being used in the landscape industry.

I saw VR demonstrated at the Belgard booth in Louisville. Belgard is a major industry supplier of pavers, retaining walls and a variety of other outdoor hardscape products. Almost certainly we'll be seeing a lot more uses for VR in the landscape services industry in the near future.

Belgard's Billy Patterson and Joe Raboine shared their company's VR service with me and several other media members at the EXPO. Patterson, director of National Residential Hardscapes, said his firm's VR system got a lot of testing prior to the official EXPO launch, and that property owners loved it – so do contractors who reported closing 80 percent of their sales using the technology.

Getting a chance to try out VR myself, I donned the goggles Patterson shared with me. I found myself immersed in a 360-view of a stunning virtual backyard hardscape project. Standing and viewing the virtual project through the goggles, I could turn my head and view the residential hardscape in all of its many details as if I were outdoors on a patio. (If you are subject to motion sickness you may want to sit in a swivel chair when you first experience VR.)

Belgard "Authorized Contractors" will use simple, inexpensive VR goggles and an ordinary smartphone to share the experience with property owners. The service is free to them.

Coincidentally, just a week after the EXPO, the American Society of Landscape Architects posted a short but fascinating article about VR. Check out ["New Technologies Promise to Upend the Design Process"](#) to read more.