

# FIVE QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## Brian Haga

**PRESIDENT**  
SCIENTIFIC PLANT SERVICE, BALTIMORE

### 1 How did you get started with Scientific Plant Service?

I've been here 25 years total. I started here as summer help and then came on as a technician. It was a good way to make money in the summers, and I'm still here. I've only owned the business for one year — I was the vice president for 15 years. I really enjoy my job; I get to work with the staff and our clients in the field. I have clients in athletic fields — little league fields and athletic programs. I like learning about their challenges and giving them solutions based on their budgets. I'm always in the middle of something ... the days fly by.

### 2 How have you done with finding labor in your market, and do you have any magic solutions?

Finding people is extremely difficult. I don't have any magic tricks. Craigslist, social media, industry sites — I use it all. But what I really try to do is work on retaining who we already have. This is a small business, so there aren't a lot of ladders to climb, but we're fair and we're honest. They say this is a seasonal business, but I can't tell you when our downtime is anymore. We plan on everyone taking a summer vacation, we tell them to put it on the calendar and we'll work around it.

### 3 Speaking of summer vacations, what's your favorite summer vacation memory?

I've been all around the country ... I'm lucky, when I was in seventh grade, my parents purchased an RV and my siblings and I piled in and headed out West. We drove to San Francisco and then went down the coast, and we saw everything in between: the St. Louis Arch, the Grand Tetons, the Grand Canyon, the Badlands. Now that I have four kids of my own, we like to go to Ocean City, Md. It's a 3-hour drive. We rent a house and unwind. It won't last forever, but I sure enjoy it. It's a lot easier than Disney World — I hope to never do that again!

### 4 Tell me more about your family — how old are your kids and what do you all do together for fun?

My wife and I live in Baltimore and we have four kids — three daughters and a son. Their ages are 13, 11, 8 and 6. We also have three cats and two dogs, a Vizsla and an Irish setter that are a part of the family. My son is a cub scout and plays soccer, the girls are into dancing. We like to go to the beach and go to the mountains and ski and snowboard. I've skied my whole life, but now I'm a snowboarder convert — I think I have more fun than the kids do.

### 5 What's the craziest thing you've seen in this industry?

Oh man, you see some stuff and you just shake your head a lot. I think the thing I see here that I think is crazy is when an employee leaves your company for the lawn care company around the corner — we call it “changing shirts.” When they land at that other company, I wonder what it was that made them leave. Did they find a better culture, a better match? It's strange to me to think it's that much different. And I think the other thing I find crazy in this industry is that two teenagers in a hatchback with a mower can suddenly do great — they can compete with Bright-View! All it takes to get started is a desire to succeed. 🍷

PHOTO: ABBY HART

#### BEST ADVICE

“I live by this and remind myself often: It's better to try and fail than fail to try. I always give it a shot. When the forecast calls for rain, the whole world thinks it's going to rain all day. Some days the forecast is off by a few hours, we prefer to get out in the field and see what we can accomplish until the rain starts. Usually, we can be productive.”

