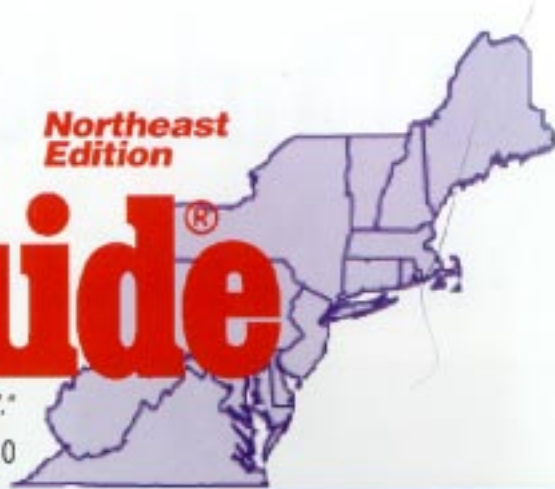


# Construction Equipment Guide

Northeast Edition

The Nation's First Regional Used Equipment Publication... Founded 1957.

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## Entrepreneurial Spirit Abounds at Chris James Landscaping

By Jon Connolly  
CEG CORRESPONDENT

Chris James' entered into the "green industry" 15 years ago, with insolent boldness and audacity.

James describes it this way, "I didn't have much background or experience but I had worked for the former owner ... and done some landscape maintenance on my own. In hindsight, I would have gone to a two-year college, taken horticulture and business management

Landscape Contractors of America.

In addition, James and 11 other contractors across the nation have banded together to form the (brand new this year) Snow and Ice Management Association (SIMA).

According to James, a firm believer in professional standards, "Our hope is to get contractors, suppliers and clients together over the next few years to set standards for this industry."

When James acquired the business in 1981, the focus was 100 percent high-

Oakland — both desired year-round, full service.

After being awarded the Calvin Klein Cosmetics contract for the same year-round service in 1987, "We [were] in the corporate market with both feet," James said.

The list of corporate clients bears this out: Union Camp Corp.; Reckitt & Colman Inc.; Robertet Inc.; Shiseido American Inc.; Datascope; Scott Foresman Inc.; and, Wilkin Property Management. This group, James esti-

mates, includes about one million square feet of fine turf maintenance and the winter safety of 4,000 people.

With growth and success comes an inventory increase. Pick-ups and dump trucks, skid steers, backhoes, trailers, blowers and modern support and shop tools have replaced the handmowers and clippers. At this time of year, these modern landscaping tools give way to eight snowplow trucks with three-meter (8-10 ft.) blades, salters, loaders and snowblowers to provide the year-round



Chris James Landscaping in Midland Park, New Jersey, counts Calvin Klein Corp. as one of its major corporate clients.

courses and worked for a landscape design company first.

"In the beginning, I was the only full-time employee, most of the equipment was old, and the industry was different then — we used handmowers and hand-clippers to provide the residential service which was the focus of the business," he added.

He admits, "I did a great deal of growing up in the first ten years — as a person and as a businessman."

James successfully endured the "trial and error" period with the help of his family — bookkeeping mother Bemice, brother Dave — and supplemented his own knowledge with courses at Cook College and as a member of green industry organizations such as NJ Landscape Contractors Assoc., NJ Irrigation Assoc., and the Associated

end residential landscaping. With little or no advertising, besides the "from your mouth to God's ear" type, he estimates that 90 percent of his new clients, both residential and corporate, are the result of satisfied customer referrals.

He adds, "[However] for the past eight years, direct mail marketing has given us very good results."

James' next learning experience came when 1984 and '85 brought the first corporate clients to the company — Aramis Inc. a cosmetic company from Oakland, NJ and Nissin International also from



Union Camp World Headquarters, Wayne, N.J. Chris James Landscaping provides year-round service in snow removal and Landscape management

# To Chris James, Landscaping is Much More than Just a Pretty Lawn



*Residential landscape installation in Hobokus, N.J.*



*Chris James Landscaping also does residential work — shown here is the home of an Ocean City, Maryland client.*

maintenance service desired, and required, by customers.

"[Today] we market ourselves as a landscape and snow removal manage-

ment company, providing additional services in parking lot sweeping, paving, sealcoating, line painting and complete tree and shrub care. We even

refer other trades," he explained.

The company's outside work runs the gamut from landscape installation and upgrades, to irrigation service and repair, to organic fertilization and pesticide application and, according to James, "We have just started networking with a few interior landscape companies to explore some joint ventures."

Fifteen years in the business and James is still excited about the work his company does and he does not hesitate to give credit to his employees.

"I didn't build this company alone," he declared.

"My office manager Lisa Laurice is invaluable running daily office operations and Glen Kreger keeps the field operations running smoothly. Ed Anderson functions as both sales manager and field operator.

"Foremen Rick Bandstra and James Kozielski are strong team leaders and have a great eye for detail and, finally, our seasonal employees play an important role in keeping us profitable and able to exceed client expectations," he said.

What does the future hold for Chris James Landscaping?

Professionalism is an important word in the James' vocabulary, profit is another. These words go hand-in-hand

and, putting money where his mind is, James empowers employees to continue their education and training as a demonstration of their willingness to accept more responsibility which will, of course, increase the company's marketability.

Field Manager Kreger, for example, is taking an irrigation course. His certification by the New Jersey Irrigation Association will expand the company's business from its current service and repair capability to installation.

James adds, "I would also like to add more design and construction so, in the future, we will need a landscape architect which broadens the horizon for my design foreman Rick Bandstra."

Hard work leads to a promising future and James explains, "Running a business takes planning, well-trained and loyal, self-managed people. Treat yourself, your employees and your clients with respect — get satisfaction from knowing you provide good jobs for your employees and excellent service to your clients.

"Profit is not a dirty word. If we all work a little smarter and more efficiently, we can all live much better and longer lives."

For more information call 201/670-7947. CEG



*(L-R) Chris James and Omar Ramos are doing a landscape installation at Robertet Inc. in Oakland, NJ.*



*Chris James Landscaping provides Wayne, NJ-based Rackitt & Colman Inc. with snow removal de-icing services.*