



EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

NURSERY A MODEL OPERATION WITH FIVE DIVISIONS

As Nebraska's largest full-service landscape design company and nursery, Lanoha Nurseries designs, builds and maintains a variety of new and existing landscapes, while offering homegrown trees, plants and mulch.

What began in 1974 as a one-man operation on the rural west side of Omaha has grown to become one of the Midwest's largest landscape design, construction and plant nurseries.

"My father (Dave) started the business just like anybody else with the proverbial check and a truck," says president Chris Lanoha. "His vision was to supply our own products and goods so we didn't have to rely on others. As soon as he could invest in property and grounds, we moved as far west within our community as we could back in the early 70's, and we're still here today.

The second-generation company has grown exponentially over the years. Situated on over 1,000 acres, Lanoha Nurseries has five divisions and 270 employees, expanding to about 380 during the peak season.

Lanoha is first and foremost a landscape construction company for residential and commercial customers. Lanoha acts as a general contractor, managing all aspects of a project. It offers a turnkey service that designs, installs and maintains properties.

"We handle many of the largest landscape construction projects in the state," Chris says. "It's what we're known for from a commercial perspective. On the residential

side, we don't come and just plant a couple trees and some perennials. We're doing site development and drainage work, delivering soils and fills, and compacting grades. And we build massive retaining walls."

Lanoha has a heavy equipment operation that performs earthmoving, excavation and timber recycling. It also has a landscape maintenance division for commercial real estate.

The garden center at the corner of 192nd and Center streets serves as a full-service retail arm, providing cash-and-carry products and bulk materials to customers. Lanoha also has a small irrigation division.

The nursery's growing operation includes both annual and perennial shrubs, and a tree farm. On the "green" side, the company practices soil remediation, soil composting, wood recycling, land clearing and mulch production.

Backbone of the business

When it comes to its equipment fleet, a mix of 25 Cat® Skid Steer Loaders and Compact Track Loaders comprise what Lanoha calls "the backbone of the business." After dark, the compact machines can be seen lighting up the night as they whir about in constant motion moving materials within Lanoha's yard.

The company's Cat fleet also includes a dozen mini excavators and compact wheel loaders, medium wheel loaders, small to medium-size excavators, and two 953 Track Loaders.

“If it involves site prep or anything within our growing operation, we use a skid steer loader and a mini excavator for a multitude of needs,” Chris says. “As laborers become more difficult to find, we have become as mechanized as possible. The Cat skid steers and mini excavators have really become probably one of the most important components in our business.”

Adds manager of operations and equipment Jared Romick:

“We’re running 25 Cat skid steers and compact track loaders, and we put them through the paces pretty much every day. We’re running eight to 10 hours every day with every one of those machines. When you’re in a machine for eight to 10 hours a day and it’s beating on you, that’s not pleasant. But with our Cat equipment everything we’ve had so far has been a comfortable machine to run. And that’s important.”

When Lanoha Nurseries first started, it had a small mixed fleet of machines.

“I grew up operating a lot of used equipment, and I’ve always respected the Cat name,” Chris says. “We always said if we could ever get to that point, Caterpillar would be our equipment manufacturer of choice. As our business has grown, quality means everything to us as a company, and we try to align with first-rate vendors and manufacturers. I think Caterpillar is on top of its game, and that’s why we rely on Cat machines and NMC (Nebraska Machinery Co.) for parts and service support.”

Uptime is critical

Lanoha runs its Cat compact machines continuously—often seven days a week, 24/7 on a lot of its operations.

“Equipment is a big part of our business,” Chris says. “The Cat skid steer loaders, wheel loaders and excavators enable us to do what we do. We’re a hard-pushing and hard-operating company, and the Cat equipment is right there, working side-by-side with us.

“We can’t afford downtime, so I needed an equipment manufacturer and a local dealer that works hand-in-hand with us,” he continues. “And our Cat equipment has been awesome—it’s been rock solid.”

During the peak season, Lanoha’s Cat compact track loaders and skid steers run an average of about 16 hours a day, and sometimes as much as 20 hours in a 24-hour period.

“Ergonomically, they’re the best machine I’ve ever been in, especially the skid steers,” Romick says. “It’s not only the room in the cab, but the functionality of the controls and the smooth operation. Some of the other machines we’ve had before had a similar control pattern, but it just didn’t work as smoothly. So when we made the switch to Cat machines, there was a definite improvement there.”

Chris believes there’s a symbiotic relationship between employees and the tools they are given to work with.

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LANOHA NURSERIES

Location: Omaha, Neb.

Employees: 270 (380 seasonal)

Cat® equipment: Skid Steer Loaders (9), Compact Track Loaders (16), Mini Excavators (8), Wheel Loaders (7), Medium Excavators (2), Track Loaders (2)

“I’m a firm believer if I can provide my team with great equipment, they’re going to work that much harder for us,” he says.

To stay on top of maintenance for its heavy equipment fleet, Lanoha relies on notifications from Cat Product Link™ that are relayed through its Cat dealer.

“NMC will track hours and notify us of any equipment issues and alert us to maintenance intervals,” Chris says. “They utilize that function to communicate with us, so we don’t have to be constantly on top of it.”

Lanoha’s crews make extensive use of Cat attachments, including pallet forks, grapple buckets, land planes, rototillers and hammers, to name a few.

“We have racks and racks of different attachments that we run,” Romick says. “We have augers to dig holes for the trees, and several grading attachments and pulverizers. The attachments are integrated well with the machines. They are time savers and make our jobs easier.

“As laborers become more difficult to find, we have become as mechanized as possible. The Cat skid steers and mini excavators have really become probably one of the most important components in our business.”

“As far as switching attachments, it’s super easy,” he continues. “You never have to get out of the cab unless you have to attach hydraulic hoses. The control for the quick coupler is right in the cab, and it’s easy to see if an attachment is locked or unlocked.”

Operators like new D3 models

Lanoha’s Cat fleet includes several D3 Series machines, which were released two years ago and deliver improvements in operator experience, and track loader stability. Changes to the undercarriage frame and torsion axles reduce machine pitching and rocking, while still offering superior ride comfort.

“We were looking to purchase new equipment when the D3’s came out, and our equipment operators indicated that accessibility was important to them,” Chris says. “The cabs on the D3 machines have a lot more room—they’ve made major improvements. The drive trains are awesome. The operation and overall power of the Cat D3 Series compared to the older models are incredible.”

Adds Romick: “All of my operators are really fond of the 259D3. It’s by far everyone’s favorite machine to run for grading because it’s got good power for its size. It’s a little smaller, and more compact than some of the bigger machines. But you can grade a small area with the compact track loader better than some of the bigger machines.”

Lifting capacity is an important element for Lanoha, as operators carry heavy rocks that weigh anywhere from 1,500- to 3,000 pounds.

“So stability is really important,” Chris says. “We’re always on uneven terrain. We’re working in wet conditions, and we never stop. So our Cat Compact Track Loaders are workhorses for us. With the low ground pressure and the lack of compaction, they can go in and surgically do some of this work. And their ability to pick up heavy things and place them has been an aspect that’s worked really well for us.”

Given that the Cat machines play an integral role in the business, timely parts and service support is critical.

“I’ve used other equipment brands that were down for three to four weeks at a time because parts weren’t available,” Chris says. “That has never happened with our Cat machines. But when there is an issue, Caterpillar and Nebraska Machinery stand behind their equipment. The parts and service support has been a very key component as we grow.” **OTJ**



– CHRIS LANOHA
PRESIDENT