



Issue 1, 2026

Trunkline



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Message from Our Board President	3
Utah Green Conference Wrap Up	4,5
2026 UNLA Awards	7
UNLA Women In the Green Industry	8
UGC Student Connections	11





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A Message from Our Board President



Cameron Passey
UNLA President
2026

We had another great Green Conference last month and as always it has set a great start to the Season. With the unusually warm weather, it has felt a little different this year, but the optimism and anticipation for what the year will bring for our Industry was exciting. As we gathered for our Conference this year, there were many moments that made me grateful to be a part of this Industry and where I saw our mission to advance the Green Industry in promoting the intellectual, business, and social interests of our members on full display over those three days. I would like to highlight a couple.

It was a pleasure to be a part of recognizing some of the people and the amazing work that makes our industry special. As part of the Conference, we recognized a few who had been nominated and chosen by their peers and members of the UNLA. These awards highlighted the exceptional work that is being done in our State and individuals who have spent their careers influencing others and shaping our industry in the State. I encourage you to take a moment and read about these award winners in this month's Trunkline edition. I express my congratulations and gratitude to the following for their impact on our industry and their influence on many of us and our love for the Green Industry:

Craig Aston
Esther Henrichsen
Bridget McMullin
Sunline Landscapes
Chopper Landscaping
Sinc Constructors Co.
Weber Basin Water
Conservancy District

The Conference gives each of us an opportunity to learn from speakers in a classroom setting, but it also creates opportunities to learn from each other as we talk around a table at lunch or with the many vendors, business owners, other trade professionals in the halls or at a trade show booth. I had many conversations start off with "I learned" or "Did you know"...what a great way to start off the season, learning something new, collaborating with each other and building relationships that you can rely on throughout the year.

It was said that if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. But if you want to go fast and go far, we must get aligned. That is the power of this time of year, getting aligned with our teams, our partners and each other.

Now as we turn our thoughts to the start of the season and questions about the impacts the weather will have, or the demand for limited natural resources, or the proposed

(continued next page)

Board President Message

(continued)

legislation and laws that impact our industry, fill our conversations...the UNLA is here to help support your concerns. We are here to help align our voices as we continue in our efforts in making sure our members' perspectives and concerns are being seen and heard. Additionally, we are constantly looking for ways to create real value for our members as we navigate these challenges and others that face us each year.

I begin this February full of optimism, not because of the surety of things, but because of each of you. The Association would not exist without you the members, the vendor's support, the countless volunteers, and your desire to give back to the industry. Thanks again for each of your contributions. I hope each of you feel the same optimism.

Utah Green Conference Seeds Growth, Innovation, and Leadership for 2026



Green industry professionals from across Utah and the Intermountain West gathered January 5–7 for the **2026 Utah Green Conference**, held at the Mountain America Expo Center. The annual event, hosted by the **Utah Nursery & Landscape Association (UNLA)**, delivered three days of education, networking, and industry engagement for landscape contractors, nursery operators, designers, suppliers, and allied professionals.

The conference featured a full slate of education sessions and training tracks covering both technical and business-focused topics. Attendees participated in classes addressing sustainable landscape practices, water-efficient irrigation, workforce development, regulatory issues, and emerging technologies impacting the green industry.

Keynote speaker **John Kennedy** addressed conference attendees with his presentation, *"Becoming Great,"* which focused on leadership, personal ac-

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Landscape Track





countability, and the pursuit of excellence within the workplace. His message set the tone for the event, emphasizing long-term professional growth and industry stewardship.

Several events highlighted the conference's commitment to inclusion and workforce development. The **Women in the Green Industry Luncheon** provided a forum for professional connection and recognition, while **Spanish-language education sessions** expanded access to training and reflected the growing diversity of Utah's green industry workforce.

The conference trade show drew strong participation throughout the week, with hundreds of exhibitors displaying products and services spanning irrigation systems, landscape materials, nursery stock,



equipment, and emerging green technologies. The show floor served as a key networking hub, allowing attendees to explore new solutions, meet vendors, and evaluate products designed to improve efficiency and sustainability.

Now in its **64th year**, the Utah Green Conference continues to serve as the state's largest and most established gathering for green industry professionals. The 2026 event reinforced its role as a central resource for education, innovation, and professional connection, supporting the continued growth and advancement of Utah's green industry.

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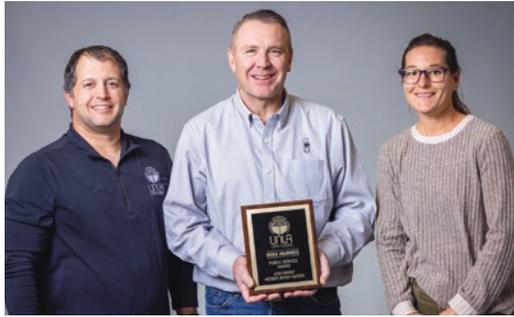
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Craig Aston



Esther Henrichsen



Jon Parry – Weber Basin Water Conservancy District



Bridget McMullin



Sinc Constructors Co.



Sunline Landscapes



Chopper Landscaping

2026 UNLA Awards

The Utah Nursery & Landscape Association (UNLA) proudly celebrated the remarkable achievements of Utah’s top green industry professionals at the 2026 UNLA Awards, held during the Utah Green Conference on January 5, 2026. This annual event shines a spotlight on the innovators, leaders, and standout companies whose exceptional dedication continues to elevate and transform the state’s green industry community, reflecting the bold spirit and relentless commitment shaping its future. From cutting edge landscape installations to visionary leadership in public service, each award recipient sets a powerful example of excellence in action—strengthening the industry today while paving the way for continued growth, sustainability, and innovation statewide.

2026 UNLA Award Winners:

- **Outstanding Merit Award:**
Craig Aston
- **Distinguished Contribution Award:**
Esther Henrichsen
- **Public Service Award:** Jon Parry with Weber Basin Water Conservancy District
- **Women in the Green Industry Award:**
Bridget McMullin
- **Commercial Landscape Installation Excellence Award:** Sinc Constructors Co.
- **Residential Landscape Installation Excellence Award:** Chopper Landscaping
- **Landscape Management & Maintenance Award:** Sunline Landscapes



Photography: Dirk Widdison at Widdison Photography



Lift, Lead, Rise: Growing the Future Together



2026 Women
in the Green
Industry
Luncheon

The **2026 Women in the Green Industry Luncheon**, held on January 5 during the Utah Green Conference, brought together women from across the state’s landscaping, nursery, and horticulture sectors for an inspiring afternoon of connection and professional growth. The luncheon, themed **“Rising by Lifting Others,”** featured guest speaker **Sarah Polzin** of Down to Earth Garden Center.

Polzin’s message centered on how women in the green industry can elevate both their careers and their communities by supporting one another, building collaborative networks, and embracing leader-



ship opportunities. Attendees engaged in thoughtful discussion, shared personal experiences, and gained practical insights on mentorship, resilience, and career development within the industry.

In addition to Sarah’s presentation, the luncheon provided a warm and welcoming space for attendees to connect with peers, strengthen professional relationships, and celebrate the expanding role of women across all green industry fields. As part of the larger Utah Green Conference, the event served as both a highlight and an important reminder of the power of community, inclusivity, and shared growth within the profession.



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Drought TOLERANT

While drought tolerance in landscape plants is a necessity in many areas, it's not an unwelcome quality in any climate. Whether drought is an occasional occurrence, a seasonal reality, or someone simply wants to avoid the chore and expense of regular watering, shrubs that tolerate dry conditions have a broad appeal. But when it comes to identifying them at the garden center, it's not usually clear which plants fit the bill, and many would-be customers end up leaving empty-handed due to confusion and overwhelm. This is precisely why it's so valuable to create and merchandise a program of drought tolerant shrubs.

Since the need for low water use plants transcends hardiness zones and climates, we offer a wide selection of colors, sizes, and cold/heat tolerance so you can put together a unique, visually compelling drought tolerant shrub display that builds customer confidence

by providing the information and inspiration they've been seeking – all at a glance, instead of having to read dozens of plant tags.



Scan the QR code for our drought tolerant recommendations.



 Janey Santos,

 @digplantwaterrepeat

“Proven Winners ColorChoice drought-tolerant shrubs like El Niño chitalpa are total rockstars in my garden—they thrive in the heat, handle dry spells like champs, and are a perfect fit for my Best for the West collection.”





Pathways to the Future: 2026 UGC Student Connections

The 2026 UGC Student Connections initiative continued to build meaningful pathways between students and the green industry, providing an engaging and supportive environment for emerging professionals. This year's event brought students to explore real world applications of their classroom learning and gain a clearer picture of the career opportunities available within the industry.

Students had the opportunity to hear firsthand from industry professionals about their career journeys, day to day responsibilities, and the skills needed to succeed in this growing field. These interactions not only broadened students' understanding of the industry but also helped them build confidence as they prepare for their future careers.

Student Connections remains a vital part of UNLA's ongoing commitment to supporting the next generation of professionals and preparing a strong, knowledgeable workforce for the future. The event continues to serve as a bridge—linking students with mentors, insights, and experiences that will help them thrive as they enter the green industry.

A heartfelt thank you to our industry members who participated and generously shared their time, expertise, and advice with the students:

- **Bryce Ward**, ASLA Utah Chapter
- **Casey Finlinson**, Central Utah Water Conservancy District
- **Natalie Boyack**, Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District
- **Nikki Wyman**, Sandy City
- **Ryan McBride**, Sunline Landscape

Your contributions make a lasting impact and help inspire the future leaders of our industry.

Utah Native Plant Society

Survey for nurseries, hobbyists, and professionals interested in sharing information and experiences with native plants!

Elevating the Residential Standard:

Chopper Landscaping's Award-Winning Vision

Chopper Landscaping has redefined the Utah residential landscape by blending modern aesthetic precision with a steadfast commitment to client trust. With **80% of its portfolio dedicated to high-end residential estates**, the firm distinguishes itself through a sophisticated approach to outdoor living, backed by comprehensive long-term warranties that ensure peace of mind for every homeowner. This



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dedication to excellence was recently recognized with the **"Utah Best Residential Landscape Installation"** award for the Thorn Residence.

The winning project masterfully addressed a complex, unmanaged slope by creating a multi-level sanctuary. Central to this success was the integration of a high-value swim spa—secured by a robust 4000 PSI concrete foundation—and a custom rectangular gas fire pit that serves as a visual anchor for the lower patio. Utilizing **QWEL-certified expertise**, the team delivered a water-efficient design that balances functional green space with sophisticated hardscaping. The process was driven by detailed **2D and 3D visualizations** from the in-house designer and PM, Mahonry D'A while Commercial PM **John Barrett** leveraged his horticultural mastery to ensure peak efficiency.

Under the leadership of **CEO Ytala Campoverde**, whose MBA background from European universities infuses the company with a global perspective on sustainable growth, Chopper Landscaping champions environmental responsibility. From utilizing low-impact equipment to responsible waste management at local disposal sites, the firm proves that luxury and sustainability are inseparable. With an in-house crew boasting over **15 years of experience** and a two-year craftsmanship warranty, Chopper Landscaping continues to set the benchmark for durable, high-performance landscapes.

Where Vision Meets
Stewardship:

Sunline Landscapes' Award-Recognized Work

Sunline Landscapes is a full-service landscape design, installation, and property care firm guided by a clear internal compass: passionate about people, growth and progression, confident in our craft, and exemplify integrity. These values inform how the company approaches its work, its teams, and its long-term relationships with clients.

Specializing in complex residential landscapes, Sunline offers continuity from initial installation through ongoing property care, ensuring outdoor environments remain cohesive, functional, and beautifully maintained as they evolve. Large-scale properties, layered plantings, and technically demanding sites are approached with precision, foresight, and respect for both design intent and natural systems.

Dedicated Property Care Managers and experienced crew leaders provide consistency and accountability, allowing issues to be addressed proactively rather than reactively. Through thoughtful planning, disciplined execution, and clear communication, Sunline delivers refined outdoor spaces that balance performance with elegance. By remaining passionate about people, growth and progression, confident in our craft, and committed to exemplify integrity, Sunline creates landscapes that feel effortless to live in and enduring in their quality.

Achievements and Initiatives:

This project reflects Sunline's ability to orchestrate a highly complex residential landscape while preserving a sense of ease and luxury. The homeowners envisioned a private retreat that could accommodate all ages and group sizes—an environment where recreation, relaxation, and privacy coexist seamlessly across nearly 90,000 square feet.



Sunline maintained and enhanced multiple outdoor rooms designed to draw guests naturally toward the rear of the property, creating privacy while embracing water as a central cooling and gathering element. Strong architectural angles were softened through layered plantings, mature specimen trees, and water features, all while preserving critical existing conditions such as a river corridor, public shut-off access, and established trees.

Key to the project's success is a dedicated Property Care Manager overseeing weekly site walks, long-term planning, and detail-driven execution, supported by an experienced crew leader with intimate knowledge of the property. Strategic partnerships further elevated the outcome: Utah Water Gardens supports the ongoing health and performance of the large pond, while Diamond Tree provides specialized plant and tree healthcare. Close collaboration with the homeowners' assistant ensures proactive communication, swift response times, and a consistently exceptional experience.

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Elevating Commercial Spaces:

Sinc Constructors' Landscape Excellence

Founded 15 years ago by Mike Sowby, Sinc Constructors Co. is a commercial landscape construction company known for delivering complex projects with care, collaboration, and quality craftsmanship. Guided by our motto, Inspiring, Building, Creating, we focus on turning landscape designs into functional, lasting spaces that people can enjoy every day.

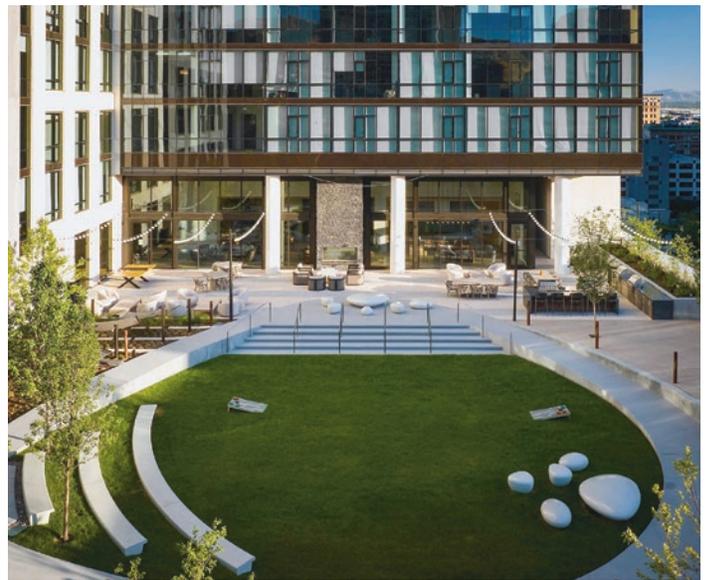
With more than 85 employees currently, Sinc Constructors Co. brings experienced leadership and hands on involvement to each project. We believe clear communication, thoughtful planning, and accountability in the field are key to successful outcomes. Our teams work closely with clients, designers, and trade partners to ensure each project is completed efficiently and aligned with the original vision.

At every level, our people take pride in their work and ownership of the finished product. Being recognized as a 2026 UNLA Award Winner reflects the dedication of our team and the culture we have built over the past 15 years.

Key Achievements/ Initiatives for Astra Tower Project (2026 UNLA Commercial Project Award Winner):

The Astra Tower in Salt Lake City is the tallest residential tower in Utah, rising 450 feet with 41 stories and multiple outdoor amenity levels from street level to the rooftop. The project required an exceptional level of coordination and technical expertise, resulting in one of the most complex high rise landscape installations ever completed in the region.

A standout feature of the project is the outdoor



park on Level 8, located nearly 100 feet above the ground. This space includes real turf grass, large caliper trees, custom seating, hammocks, grills, and fire pits. Constructing a functional green space at this elevation required engineered pedestal paver systems, lightweight planters, stadium style seating, and hundreds of cubic yards of custom lightweight soil.

Logistics became even more challenging when the tower crane was removed earlier than anticipated, forcing remaining materials to be moved by freight elevator while other trades were still active. Daily coordination and creative problem solving were essential to keep the project on schedule.

Additional complexity included the Level 22 pool deck, where a highly technical paver system with custom wind uplift anchoring was installed, and the rooftop amenity on Level 41, which features lightweight planters, integrated seating, and a custom trellis system designed to perform at a 40 plus story elevation. At street level, the project also included installation of a soil cell system to support long term urban tree health.

The success of Astra Tower was driven by a dedicated project team, led by Brandon Rowbury, Lead Project Manager, with support from Braxton Doucette, Assistant Project Manager, and Jorge Garcia, Lead Construction Manager, whose field leadership and attention to detail were instrumental throughout construction. Their combined efforts ensured the landscape was delivered safely, efficiently, and in alignment with the design vision.

USU's NCLC Team FUNDRAISER



Ten talented Utah State University students will represent USU at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition (NCLC) in East Lansing, Michigan, March 16–21. Our team will compete in 16 challenging landscape events, showcasing their skills on a national stage.

To help make this opportunity possible, we have launched an Aggie GoFundMe campaign where individuals and businesses can support our team. Businesses who donate \$500 or more will have their logo proudly displayed on our official competition T-shirts*, giving your company visibility while investing in the next generation of landscape professionals.

VIEW OUR TEAMS FUNDRAISER VIDEO
OR DONATE ONLINE HERE:

<https://giving.usu.edu/aggiefunded-usu-national-landscape-team#advocates>



*If your companies would like it's logo on the competition T-shirt, please submit a donation and logo by February 13, 2026. Please send logos and questions directly to Professor Pam George at pamela.george@usu.edu.



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Calendar 2026

JANUARY 22 – MARCH 10

Irrigation Association Classes

FEBRUARY

10 **CWEL** Webinar Water-Wise Landscape Design
Principle & Practices for Conservation

25-27 **WCWCD QWEL** Seminar & Test

APRIL

22-24 **JVWCD QWEL** Seminar & Test

OCTOBER

19-21 **CUWCD QWEL** Seminar & Test

27 **Southern Utah Green Conference**
Dixie Convention Center

For more information go to www.utahgreen.org/events