

Tell us about your company, your area of expertise.

D&J Landscape Contractors (formerly Gardenscapes Inc.) mission as a Landscape Construction firm is to create beauty, pride, and meaning within the personal home spaces for the predominantly female clients we serve. We achieve this by establishing successful one-on-one relationships, and by learning the unique vision of what makes a sanctuary.

As one of the few 5% female Landscape Contractors in the state of Oregon, I'm the original founder and one of two owners. Jamie Hansen is my business partner. My skills are in the ability to organize the numerous details that go into manifesting a perfectly-suited landscape, including effectively managing crew, sub-contractors, landscape designers, and architects. I provide my clients with assurance that everything's taken care of, and they'll receive an end result they're proud of.

Tell us the path you took to where you are today.

I graduated from University of Oregon in 1986 with a B.S. in Sociology and a certificate in Women's Studies. Once out of college I worked as a case manager at a family shelter. Since the hours were somewhat flexible, I had time to start a Landscape Maintenance business, which was a true passion of mine.

Describe a day in your professional life?

The first two hours, which begin at 6am, are hectic: sorting through emails, making phone calls, ensuring materials are scheduled for on-time delivery, while simultaneously lining up the two-to-three crews and assigning their daily tasks. From mid-morning to mid-afternoon, I perform sales and management tasks. Mid-afternoon to early evening I have client appointments to check and monitor projects, and visit job sites. Once a week I'm on a job-site or picking up plant materials at nurseries. My business partner is our field supervisor and she's on-site 85% of the time.

How do you maintain a work/life balance?

Maintaining a work/life balance is difficult. Our line of work is seasonal, yet because our services are so comprehensive, and we have such a great reputation, we're busy year-round. To maintain sanity, I leave town once a month for a weekend and unwind by participating in dog shows.

How does your company set itself apart from others in the field?

We have a lot of integrity for our work. To be honored with the task of creating meaningful, beautiful spaces at people's homes is a challenge and opportunity we welcome. Therefore, we set ourselves apart by making the experience of home improvement one people value. We focus on the details. We provide excellent customer service. We encourage our client's

ideas and dreams from beginning to end, and communicate with them throughout the process. We're a women owned and operated business, therefore by utilizing traditionally feminine traits such as negotiation, collaboration, and commitment, we set ourselves vastly apart from what most people expect from a Landscape Contractor.



What have been some of your greatest accomplishments? How do you measure success?

My greatest accomplishments derive from the heartfelt satisfaction my clients receive by having a beautifully landscaped home. They receive a sense of pride and completion once the job is done. Although the amount of joy plants and flowers provide isn't necessarily a surprise to me, it is to them once they see the immense difference small updates can make. To me, witnessing reinvigorated pride in a home is an accomplishment.

How does your company contribute to this community and empowering women?

Gardenscapes is always involved in giving back to the community in some way. We've donated our time and materials planting gardens of all sorts, including one we're quite proud of for Habitat for Humanity. As far as empowering women, we do this in two ways: first, we have an all female crew which opens doors for new and rewarding professions for women; second, by providing a sanctuary for women—a designated place where a woman can escape or replenish her spirit surrounded by beauty—we're giving them gifts of empowerment each time she goes to her garden.

Why do you get up to go to work everyday? What inspires you?

First and foremost, I love plants. I love cultivating things from start to finish, and seeing how things grow. I'm also motivated by the challenges of running a successful business. I'm good at bringing people together—such as design-

ers, employees, subcontractors, and clients—to transform spaces. A lot of inspiration comes from the collaborative energy developed as a project moves from thought to finish.

What are your Future goals? Future Programs? Future Markets?

More and more D&J Landscape Contractors is evolving to become an ecologically sustainable business. We actively research and support other local businesses who utilize organic materials. Not only do we strive to protect our employees and our planet, we also impart what we learn to our clients through the landscaping choices they make.

D&J Landscape Contractors' expansion is happening from our efforts to continue to work with clients we enjoy, and connect with causes we believe in. Several years ago we had a paid opportunity to develop garden spaces for an Early Head Start building in NE Portland. By combining my expertise of landscape design construction, project management, and past social work experience, I was able to produce some amazing results for them. Because of the great work Head Start does to serve underprivileged families, I understood the importance and need of having a welcoming environment.

What are lessons that have been invaluable on your career path?

Building positive, long-term relationships is the most important lesson I've learned. The value of earning trust should never be under-estimated.

How is technology impacting the nature of your business and how you do your work?

Cultivating the earth for beauty and harvest has been around since the beginning of civilization. Technology has little impact on my digging in the dirt. However design

software has been a support for the landscape architects I work with. And I can't live without my cell phone!

What is your work ethic, and how do you instill that in your organization?

Be honest, communicate, have expectations for greatness, and guarantee the best energy, and service I can give.

What advice would you give to other business owners wanting to start a business?

Use the resources of the Small Business Association, take as many business classes as possible, find an excellent marketing partner if you don't have time or ability yourself, understand accounting. Look for a mentor to bounce off ideas, share hurdles, etc.

What women have inspired you on your career path?

Women in general are an inspiration. We're faced with choices all the time. Some are difficult and some are obvious. What becomes inspirational is the choices we make and how we live with our decisions.

Share your Favorite Inspiration Quote or Words of Wisdom:

"If you can't be direct, why be?" Lily Tomlin

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Know a successful woman business owner – for-profit or non-profit – that should be profiled? Have her answer these questions and send them with a photo(s) to michele@thenwwj.com.

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