

May 2009

Growing The Florida Landscape

# Ornamental

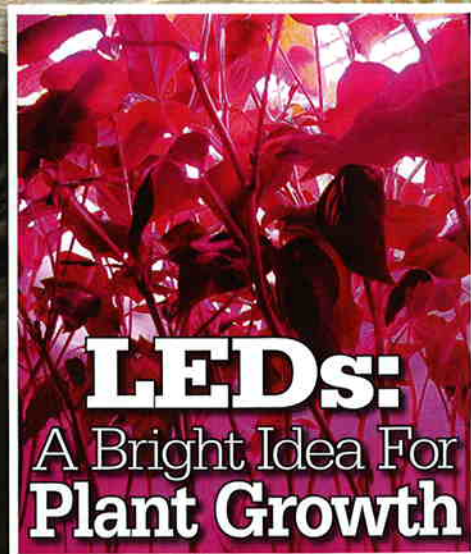
O U T L O O K

**Darrell Turner**  
Turner Tree & Landscape

## Seizing Opportunity

**Up-Selling In  
A Down Market**

**Exotic-Looking  
Natives**



**LEDs:**  
A Bright Idea For  
**Plant Growth**

# Seizing Opportunity

From the ground up, Turner Tree & Landscape builds into a market-leading landscape operation.

By Richard Jones

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The biggest and best often start out small and unassuming. They just need an opportunity to grow. That's exactly what happened with Bradenton's Turner Tree & Landscape. What started out as one man and a dump truck has grown into one of the more creative and comprehensive full-service landscape contractor businesses in Florida.

"I moved down here from Virginia with a truck in 1977," says owner Darrell Turner. "A company helping to build the Interstate hired me to haul dirt."

That job kept Turner going for a while, but eventually the Interstate work was finished. As luck would have it, though, at about that same time, Turner met up with the owner of a Holiday Inn franchise, who hired him to do some landscaping for his five hotels. That work led to other landscaping jobs, and eventually a profitable niche: hauling trees and trading in specimen trees. Turner literally went from yard to yard looking for unique specimen trees (pineapple palms, for example) bought them from homeowners, and sold them at a profit. It was a lucrative business.

"We specialized in Canary Island dates. Everyone wanted between 10 and 20 feet of clear trunk, and those trees grow only 6 inches a year, so they were very hard to find. In the 1980s, we'd buy them from the homeowner for \$30 a foot and sell them for \$125 a foot. And if you planted them, you could get \$250 a foot."

Over time, the business expanded, adding bigger clients (including Disney and Universal Studios) and new services. "We found ourselves doing the specimen palms for a project, but not doing the other work," Turner says. "We decided we should be planting the trees too, and from there it just evolved into doing the whole

Darrell Turner

## Turner Tree & Landscape

[www.turnertree-landscape.com](http://www.turnertree-landscape.com)

**Owner:** Darrell Turner

**Location:** Bradenton, FL

**Year Founded:** 1981

**Employees:** 77

**Services:** Full-service landscape contractor specializing in design/build, installation, hardscapes, and xeriscapes; 1,200 acres of tree production.