

Get to Know Howard K. Freilich

The logo for 'Turf' features the word in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A stylized green grass blade is integrated into the letter 'u'.The logo for 'Tree Services' is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf icon is placed above the 'e' in 'Services'. Below the main text, the tagline 'Taking Tree Care to New Heights' is written in a smaller, italicized font.The logo for 'Turf DesignBuild' features the word 'Turf' in a small, orange, sans-serif font above the word 'Design'. 'Design' is in a black, sans-serif font, and 'Build' is in a large, bold, orange, sans-serif font.The logo for 'PLOW' is in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

In 1979, Howard K. Freilich, a young, energetic entrepreneur and horticulturalist, founded Blondie's Treehouse Inc. in Westchester, New York, out of the back of a small camper trailer.

Today, Blondie's has grown into one of the top 10 interior horticultural firms in the nation and one of *Inc.* magazine's fastest-growing companies, receiving more than 30 national awards for design and service.



Blondie's operates a midtown showroom with a team of landscape architects and horticulturalists through its division, J. Mendoza Gardens, to create gardens and landscapes. The division has worked on a large variety of projects for both corporate and residential clients. Blondie's also operates a flower studio in the heart of the Flower District.

Thirty miles north of New York City, in Mamaroneck, lies Blondie's greenhouses and corporate headquarters in a renovated, 100-year-old factory with more than 35,000 square feet of greenhouses, an interior plant center, a holiday showroom and storage facility, a special event workshop, a replica studio and administration offices.

The [Blondie's Treehouse Inc.](#) brand has gained special recognition by providing landscape interiors and exterior plantings and floral arrangements and special event services for renowned New York City residences, cultural institutions and hotels, including The Plaza, Omni, Ritz, Mandarin Oriental, Waldorf Astoria and Pierre.



Proudest moment in business: The purchase of more than 15 companies throughout our 35-plus years in business. It's always a challenge bringing together the many different cultures, creativity and talented staff members

from each company and having them mesh within one company to make it work. I'm very proud to say that most of my team members have been with us for 15 to 25 years. Many of my managers came from the companies I purchased. I'm very proud of the team!

Biggest business challenge: Managing the enormous growth in our landscape architecture design and construction division for the New York City marketplace. Over the last three years, and for the projected next three years, the amount of construction will be at a record high that I know will be short-lived. It's been growing by 7 to 9 percent each year for the past three years, and I believe it will continue to grow at this pace for the next three years. I think it will then slowly start to diminish by 15 to 20 percent.

So, how do I continue to pay a large staff to handle the high growth period when things start to slow down? How do I sustain growth? How do I keep my overhead down?



A variety of New York City projects Blondie's Treehouse has worked on, including Dream Downtown (below), owner Howard Freilich's favorite.

Best sources of landscape design/build inspiration: I am very fortunate to have a staff of very talented landscape architects who design and create new things every day. I also visit trade shows all over the world and read gardening magazines.

Favorite plant or plant combination: I'm really into purple, blue and orange color palettes this year. I just think it's a nice, cool-color palette that really works well. During the hot days of summer in New York, it's always great to see cool colors in a flower palette. I also really love Colocasia "Elephant Ear" plants, which come in different sizes and great colors like magentas, greens and dark purple with bold, big leaves. They also work wonderfully as accent plants mixed with any plant palette you want to use.

Monday morning motivation: The challenge of managing more than 100 people, 1,000 clients and trying to create something new, different and better than my previous projects.

Business worry that keeps you up at night: Safety is always my biggest concern. Many of the sites we work on are under full construction with cranes and other massive equipment on site. We are constantly running power tools. During the holiday season, we install Christmas trees with electric lights that can catch on fire.

Landscape design mentor: Jeff Mendoza, who heads our landscape architecture division, was a sculptor and artist in a previous life and is one of the most talented individuals I've had the pleasure of working with and knowing.



Favorite business or landscape design book: "Hortica: Color Cyclopedia of

Garden Flora and Exotic Plants Indoors” by Alfred Byrd Graf. It’s an encyclopedia of plants that helps me with plant selection and combinations.

Landscape design project that makes you smile every time you drive past it: Dream Downtown. We had many time obstacles and dealings with construction crews on this installation. The pool was supposed to have 70 cubic yards of fine beach sand craned in. At the last minute, we couldn’t use a crane so we had to place the sand with buckets. It took one full week with seven guys to bring the sand up bucket by bucket to create the luscious oasis of Bamboo Palms, flowering Oleander trees, fragrant Hibiscus, annuals, 8-foot trailing ivy. It just keeps growing and getting better and better.

Describe your business in five years: Growing, expanding and increasing our brand as New York’s premier interior-exterior design construction company, as well as expanding our national sales.

Connect with Howard Freilich and Blondie’s Treehouse Inc.

Websites: www.blondiestreehouse.com, www.jmendozagardens.com (exterior design division)

Facebook: [BlondiesTreehouse](https://www.facebook.com/BlondiesTreehouse)

Twitter: [@BTHnyc](https://twitter.com/BTHnyc), [@BDBnyc](https://twitter.com/BDBnyc)

Houzz: www.houzz.com/pro/blondiestreehouseinc/blondies-treehouse-inc

PHOTOS: BLONDIE’S TREEHOUSE