

# Greening Up the Big Apple



Source: [www.TurfMagazine.com](http://www.TurfMagazine.com)

Brian Tauscher, president of [Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction](#) in Ridgewood, New Jersey, has got it all covered. Whether it is installing and maintaining green roofs in the Big Apple or keeping his staff engaged during the winter with [Executive Snow Services, Inc.](#), they're a busy group in all four seasons.

"I suppose we're the exception and not the norm. We actually ramp up from about 18 employees in the summer to more than 50 in winter," says Tauscher

Tauscher's firm is busy installing green roofs and green gardens in New York City, as well as providing an extensive range of residential and commercial landscape services, including design/build, landscape installations, tree services and commercial landscape maintenance. The company also works with city planners in the NYC Million Trees Program, a joint government and private initiative to replenish the urban tree canopy. Tauscher's team consists of experienced arborists, horticulturists, licensed irrigation contractors and certified pest applicators on his staff to offer a variety of services to clients.



Working with city planners, Artisan Gardens is doing its part to replenish NYC's urban tree canopy. Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

"About 40 percent of our summer business is in green roofs and green gardens," says Tauscher. "The remainder is split between the Million Trees Program, with our design/build services group and maintaining the grounds at Ramapo College."

Tauscher explains that green gardens are more typical of outdoor builds, having a courtyard or balcony effect on a rooftop including ornate planters and even water-walls. Porous pavers with no joint compound allow moisture to

be captured and drained or reused from these terraces.

Green roofs are designed with more groundcover options on skyscrapers with additional plantings and walkways. Tauscher says that green roofs can be much more extensive and utilize several structural components, including protection board, a waterproof membrane, insulation, drainage/storage layer, filter fabric, growing medium and the main ingredient turf/plantings. In addition, many builds come with greywater recycling units.



Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

## Turn down the heat

Builds can range from four to six weeks, and working in the intense city heat can be challenging, he says. Both green roofs and gardens offer the City what it needs most, relief from the urban heat-island effect that, according to the U.S. EPA, can average 1.8 to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than suburban area. That effect is even greater immediately above pavement and “non-green” rooftops.

Any contractor who has installed green roofs or gardens atop skyscrapers knows what a daunting challenge it is.



Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

“One of the real trials can be getting the soil to the roof,” says Tauscher. “Often, buildings in the city don’t have elevators that go all the way to the rooftop, so the last floor or two we might have to hump dirt through stairwells. On extensive builds where we are throwing a lot of material around, we sometimes use a crane if we can find big enough.”

Tauscher holds a degree in landscape architecture from Rutgers University’s Cook College, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, and spent 22 years as operations manager at Trees Now, Inc. in Cream Ridge, New Jersey, a large nursery and install company. He started Artisian Gardens LLC in 2005.



Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

Tauscher says he got his start in the landscaping business by being a paperboy.

“I was a paperboy and a garden center was on my route, so every day I’d ask them when they were going to hire me? At 16 years old I got my work permit and they were nice enough to give me a shot. That was 25 years ago, and I’ve been knee-deep in the business since,” he recalls.

The only maintenance the company regularly performs is on the green roofs and gardens they build and the grounds care at Ramapo College. Each green build has a one-year guarantee and afterward the company contracts to maintain the

properties, because, says Tauscher, “It’s not as simple as bringing in a gardener to prune a patio area. Because of the structure of the groundcover areas, there are things to be considered when cutting, edging, trimming and pruning. Our guys are experts.”



Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

Design/build covers the usual demand with clients who want outdoor kitchens and fire pits, which sit atop paver patios and outdoor living areas. The company also does complete turf install and landscaping of trees, bushes and flowerbeds.

Artisian Gardens handles 98 percent of the lawn maintenance and snow removal for Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey, which sits on 50 acres and has thousands of square feet of walkways.



Photo: Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction

“We handle all the grounds maintenance, plantings and installs during the warm seasons and, of course, with snow removal, whether 2 inches or 22 inches we have to clear every parking lot and walkway after each event,” explains Tauscher.

The company has a full array of snow removal equipment, and Tauscher says having the right equipment is half the battle.

The company maintains utility vehicles, mini-track loaders, snow pushers, skid-steer loaders, front-end loaders, backhoes, dump trucks, pickup trucks, open-top containers and as assortment of plows. “We really like the Western snowplows. They are durable and offer a range of sizes.”



Photo: Executive Snow Services, Inc.

Tauscher’s Executive Snow Services does only commercial properties., utilizes their own equipment and doesn’t sub-out the snow removal work.

“Ramapo College is always a big job when the snow season starts,” explains Tauscher. “With over 6,000 students all trying to get to class and miles of walkways to clear and all the parking lots, we are always monitoring the weather; if ice is forecast we might treat the walkways before; we don’t want anyone falling or sliding around.” The area averages over 45 inches of snow a year.



Photo: Executive Snow Services, Inc.

## **Employee retention**

The company continues to grow, and managing that growth, along with retaining great employees and dedication to customer services are the primary

challenges Tauscher faces. "Employee retention can only be realized when the lines of communication are always open, no matter how busy we get we have to discuss things. I insist upon an open-dialogue and meet with my staff on every important decision. It's their future, too, and your staff makes you successful," says Tauscher.

Tauscher says company growth and adding personnel are hand-in-hand and similar in that word-of-mouth is how they attract new clients and also how they attract better employees. "So managing growth of business and our employees is our greatest challenge going forward, no question about it," says Tauscher.

What's next? "Well there are a lot of rooftops in New York City and the need is great, so I think we're a good choice when businesses consider the advantages of green spaces – and there are many. They can offer their employees a relaxing garden environment to take a break from the daily grind while giving back to the environment, and there are even studies showing that green roofs save energy usage and money. Their time has come and we're well-positioned; it's win-win for us."



Tauscher's Executive Snow Services handles the snow removal for Ramapo College in Mahway, New Jersey. Photo: Executive Snow Services, Inc.

## **Artisan Gardens LLC, Landscape Design and Construction, Executive Snow Services**

**President:** Brian Tauscher

**Founded:** 2004

**Headquarters:** Ridgewood, New Jersey

**Markets:** New York City and New Jersey

**Services:** Residential/commercial landscaping, design/build, green roofs and gardens, property maintenance, trees services and snow removal

**Employees:** 18 to 50