

# Future issues facing the UAE Landscape Industry?

## Lack of Projects ?

It is not often that you get to achieve close relationships with UAE nationals. Several years ago at a Property show in Dubai I gave a Presentation on 'Adding Value to Real Estate through Landscape'. One of the local gentlemen that attended was Otaiba Al Otaiba. We have built a great relationship over that time and he is now on the Chamber of Commerce in Abu Dhabi and has also become Chairman of the Real Estate Committee. He is understandably excited in stating that the Emirate of Abu Dhabi now has projects forecast in excess of 3 Trillion Dirham's!

## Lack of Construction Materials ?

This has historically been a problem with inconsistencies in supply coupled with increasing prices of material supplies such as Concrete and Steel etc. But this can be planned for with long term Supply agreements based on volume. Also international production can be increased or negotiated from other sources with foresight.

## Lack of Quality Plant material ?

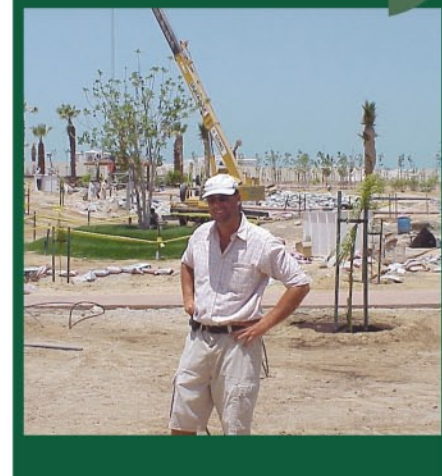
I had a discussion with one the leading Horticulturists in UAE recently where he commented on his frustration at spending copious amounts of time designing and specifying the Plant palettes for Landscape Designs, only to have them substituted by the Contractor at the last minute due to lack of availability.

He then commented "What am I needed for", further commenting "if it is going to be managed this way why don't they just leave it up to the Contractor to just fill up the space with whatever Plants they can find at the time".

In defense of the Contractor, it is well known that Developers have historically left confirmation of the Landscape

Contract for projects with as little as one months' notice to commence. So where is the solution with this issue ? Perhaps this could begin with the co-operation of the Client and Landscape Architect. To ensure procurement of the plants specified, they should engage the services of a company such as Plants International that specializes in the set up, operation and management of project specific plant nurseries, either to contract grow

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the plant material or an on site nursery for their unique landscape development.

Contract growing of Plant material is standard and common practices in countries such as Australia to guarantee the success of the project and ensure that the Design intent is not compromised by providing:

- Guaranteed Plant numbers required.
- Fully acclimatized Plant material in peak condition, upon opening of Project.
- Fixed purchase price of Plant material.
- Advanced Plant sizes.
- Plants supplied to the actual size specified, height, width and caliper thickness.

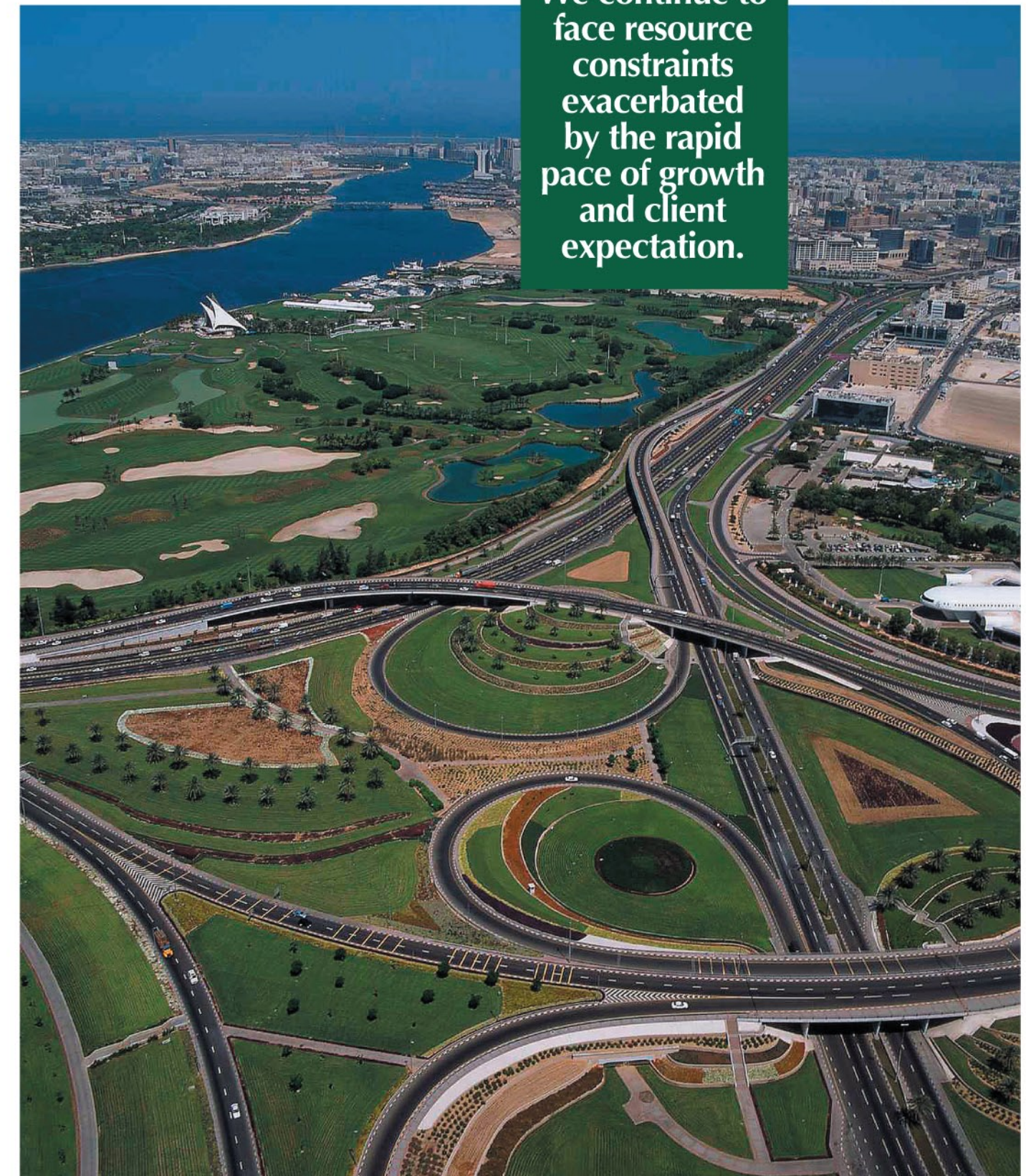
## Lack of Water?

Fresh or Sweet water is a rare commodity in many parts of the world. Is Desalinated water a long term sustainable solution? Many upcoming Projects will experience a lack of immediately available water Resources and many current Projects will have issues with excess Grey water disposal. Water conservation, volumes expended and cost reductions will become even greater issues as time goes on.

## Lack of Human Resources?

We continue to face resource constraints exacerbated by the rapid pace of growth and client expectation.

By far the most concerning is the ongoing availability and supply of quality, competent Landscape Industry staff. In an environment where most



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issues can usually be solved by money, this one cannot.

There is also a lack of Recruitment or HR companies that deal specifically with Landscape Architects, Designers, Project Managers, Horticulturists etc in the Middle East.

It is now evident in this fast paced market, to secure Management (especially qualified Project Managers) the company with the best financial offer wins. Employers have

no alternative but to offer larger salary packages for Management rather than risk delays on Project handovers, and the late penalties.

It is also becoming difficult to attract and retain staff compared to their Country of Origin, especially with the current exchange rates. For example, many professionals are returning home with more experience, to strong project developments in their

countries (India for example) and the added advantage of affordable accommodation. When I first came to the UAE the Dirham to Australian dollar exchange rate was 2 to 1. Now it is around 3 to 1.

Some in the industry will be luckier than others in facing these issues.

The Definition of Luck.....Preparation meeting Opportunity.