

A Special Touch

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'T'. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the word.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is positioned above the letter 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is at the bottom right.The logo for DesignBuild, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is positioned above the letter 'i' in "Design". A registered trademark symbol (®) is at the bottom right.The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is at the bottom right.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

Cemetery cleanup: how one company gives back



Sometimes a little action can go a long way. Not that there's anything little about mowing and trimming a 12-acre cemetery that had become completely overgrown. That's what Turf Masters Lawn Care (www.turfmasterslc.com) did in Pascagoula, Miss., and their donation of manpower has attracted a lot of attention from people and news media throughout the region. "WLOX TV did a nice story, and there were front-page articles in The Clarion Ledger, The Mississippi Press and the Mobile Press Register," explains Steve Jordan, company founder. "I've just been overwhelmed by so many people and the letters and cards I get everyday."



Steve Jordan, owner of Turf Masters Lawn Care, says he was touched to help get the cemetery back in shape after watching someone struggle through the tall grass and weeds to visit a grave site. "I had no idea this would touch so many people when I started doing this, but the response makes it very easy to commit to doing something like this when you know it's appreciated by so many folks," he explains. *Photos courtesy of Turf Masters Lawn Care.*

The cemetery mowing project came about when Jordan noticed the condition of Jackson County Memorial Park and Perpetual Care Cemetery while his crews were mowing for one of their regular maintenance customers at a neighboring church. The cemetery had been placed into receivership, and there was no one providing maintenance. "It had been neglected for about a year," says Jordan.

"I saw a gentleman who was really struggling to get to a grave site. It just touched me, and I felt like I was in a position to give back to the community that has supported me so much and helped my business grow."

Turf Masters was founded in 2000, at the time strictly as an athletic grounds maintenance company. "We had the city, and then the high schools came a year or so later. We now have 28 athletic fields, over 200 acres, that we maintain," says Jordan. The crews do mowing, aerating, fertilization and all other aspects of turf maintenance and soil management on these fields.

From there, the company broadened its scope of work to include all areas of landscape installation, including irrigation and hardscape. It also branched out into commercial lawn maintenance for office parks, shopping centers, casinos and resorts. "We're also starting to do some maintenance on large residential properties," adds Jordan. "With capital installation projects pretty slim pickings over the past year, we're really focused on our maintenance division."

Turf Masters maintains six cemeteries, so it had a little bit of experience at its disposal when it came to getting Jackson County Memorial Park and Perpetual Care back into shape. Still, the challenge was pretty daunting. "We started with a cleanup. It took about three mowings simply to get it down to an acceptable level. Since then, we've lowered the height about a half-inch each mowing, and we've gotten the grass to where we want it. And, there were a lot of gravestones that were becoming overgrown with weeds, so we worked hard to get it back into shape."

In all, Turf Masters donated about 100 hours to get the cemetery cleaned up and maintained the way it should be. "Cemeteries are certainly labor-intensive to maintain, but we take great pride in our work and have a lot of respect for how special these places are for those families who have loved ones there," says Jordan. "So, we try to be extra sensitive and take extra care on those sites."

Ownership of the cemetery is still undecided, and the legal process is still unfolding, but one thing is for sure: Jackson County Memorial Park and Perpetual Care Cemetery will not fall into the same deteriorated condition it had. "My commitment is that we're not going to let it get back into the shape it was in," says Jordan. "I'm not sure I can afford to send crews out there every week, but we're definitely going to keep it under control. I'm going to do that no matter how long it takes."

This approach isn't terribly surprising, considering that Turf Masters has made it a habit to volunteer its time and resources for landscape projects that better the lives of local residents. "We're very community oriented," says Jordan. "We participate in the PLANET projects, such as the PLANET Day of Service." Not long ago, the company installed a new entry for a local youth baseball facility, including pavers and a wrought iron fence. In addition to providing opportunities to volunteer their services, getting involved in PLANET has helped the company set itself apart, he adds, "We try to portray a professional image and be sure we're portrayed as qualified to get the job done."



Turf
Masters
Lawn Care
in
Pascagoula,
Miss.,
volunteered
to clean up
and mow the
12-acre
Jackson
County
Memorial
Park and
Perpetual
Care
Cemetery,
which had
become
severely
overgrown
after a
year of
neglect.

With its mix of large athletic fields and commercial maintenance accounts, Jordan prefers to run Scag zero-turn mowers. “We love our dealer, and I’ve made the comment that our trucks don’t leave in the morning without orange in the back. That’s our company color,” he explains. Those trucks are also pretty special, he points out. “We recently purchased three Super Lawn Trucks (SLT) with 20-foot bodies. They’re enclosed body trucks with an interchangeable graphics system on the side. They’re self-contained; they have their own fuel system for mixed fuel and gas for the mowers. It helps makes us very efficient.”

Not only do the enclosed bodies with interchangeable images portray a professional image, but they allow Turf Masters to change its truck signage as desired. “People think we have more trucks than we do because they see the image on one side, and it’s different on the other side. And, the trucks come with two sets of canvas, so after about a year we can change them out for a different scene,” Jordan explains. “The layout is the same, but the photo can be changed.”

While the rolling billboards provide people a good sense of what services Turf Masters Lawn Care offers, the true story of the company is seen in its work on sites like Jackson County Memorial Park and Perpetual Care Cemetery. “The amount of lives this has touched is really amazing,” says Jordan. “I had no idea this would touch so many people when I started doing this, but the response makes it very easy to commit to doing something like this when you know it’s appreciated by so many folks. The good Lord has put me in a position to give back to my community, that’s just what you should do if

you've been successful. I'm so happy I've been able to do that."

Patrick White is a freelance writer and editor who has covered every aspect of the green industry in the past 13 years. He is based in Middlesex, Vt., and is always on the lookout for unusual stories.