

Boutique Turf Services



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If there is anything that Peter Lewis learned from his years of working with golf course turfgrass management, it was attention to detail.

"You don't survive at a private country club unless you do a good job," he says. It's that attention to detail that he has incorporated into his own business, Lewis Brothers Landscaping in Falmouth, Maine.

After earning an Associates of Science degree in turfgrass management at the University of Massachusetts/Stockbridge School of Agriculture, Lewis pursued a career in golf course management for 17 years, including working as a superintendent at a private club in Connecticut.

He moved to Maine in 1996 and worked for nurseries before starting Lewis Brothers Landscaping with his brother Pat in 1997. Like Peter, Pat also served many years as a golf course superintendent, only in his case at a private club in Maine. Pat, who also earned a degree from Stockbridge, serves as the staff and scheduling leader for Lewis Brothers Landscaping. The company specializes in serving the residential sector in and around Portland, Maine.

"Some people think landscaping is just mowing lawns. They'll ask what it is that we do," says Lewis, repeating one of the company's favorite sayings – "We don't mow, we don't blow, we don't do snow."



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The company focuses on boutique services, and has a list of trusted referrals for services such as mowing, nutritional and pesticide applications.

Then, of course, he tells clients that his company offers patios, stone walls, garden maintenance, lawn installation, landscape renovation, lot

clearing, drainage, tree pruning and removal, drainage, water features, edging, mulching, composting, weeding, deadheading, irrigation review and fall cutback. But that's not all. Lewis Brothers Landscaping, relying upon its decades of experience working in golf turf, knows how to build playing surfaces requiring fine turf, such as grass tennis and bocce courts and home putting greens. Artificial turf? Yep, they can do that, too.

"We work with a number of designers and architectural firms in the area who extend us the opportunity to bid, or they choose us outright," Lewis says.

Lewis Brothers Landscaping

Owner: Peter Lewis

Founded: 1997

Headquarters: Falmouth, Maine

Markets: Portland Metro region

Services: Garden maintenance; lawn consultation, renovation and installation; drainage improvement and correction; pruning and tree removal; water features; lot clearing and tree removal; installation of fine turfgrass playing surfaces; consultation and assistance on artificial surfaces; consultation to area golf course superintendents; and installation of patios, stone walls and plant materials

Employees: 8

Website: www.lewisbrothers.net

Focusing on specialties

Focusing on boutique services enables Lewis Brothers Landscaping to have more control over its day-to-day activities. "The people who contact us know that they've contacted us for one of our specialties. It hasn't hurt our business at all," says Lewis.

Lewis Brothers Landscaping has a list of trusted referrals for services the company does not provide, such as mowing, irrigation, nutritional and pesticide programs, and architectural services. "We're very finicky about who we recommend," Lewis points out.

To differentiate his company from others, Lewis insists his employees look and act professional with clients. Most of the time, either Lewis or his brother will be on the job site to ensure the clients get the benefit of their years of experience and knowledge.

"Twenty years of experience for both of us starting with degrees at Stockbridge and with our experience on golf courses, it's easy to turn a lawn around or to help people keep their lawn in good health," he says.

Despite the fact that the Lewis brothers have years of golf turf management experience, many clients say they don't want their lawns to look like a golf course, but want it improved.


Rave reviews

Lewis Brothers Landscaping has eight employees. At the company's high point, just before the Great Recession, it was pulling in more than \$1 million annually. The economic crash caused the brothers to scale back. Now they're back in growth mode with a goal of building their company back up to 10 to 12 employees within the next five years.

Lewis looks for personality and a solid work ethic when hiring employees. Each newhire gets a two-week probationary period during which Lewis observes whether the employee is detail-oriented, especially on cleanup jobs. It's a work value Lewis developed while working at private country clubs.



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Lewis Brothers Landscaping employees discuss the game plan for a new native flagstone installation ... 

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... and the completed project.

"We look to see whether they ask what they can do next rather than twiddling their thumbs waiting for us to give them their next job," says Lewis. "We like to see some incentives on their part.

"The people we end up keeping, we're very comfortable with leaving them onsite with clients without us. We get rave reviews about our employees. I've never had so many wonderful comments about the crew as I've had this year."

Because the company's services can only be done in about nine months out of the year, it means that employees have to find work elsewhere for about three months.

"My biggest challenge is keeping people," Lewis says.

One of the incentives that he always provided even before the Affordable Health Care Act was instituted was to provide health insurance for employees who stayed with the company for a few years.

"That's a big thing for a small company, but the one thing that could keep them longer," he points out. "We had decided we had met all of our equipment needs, so we invested in our employees in the hopes of retaining them for a longer career with us."



During the idle time, many of the Lewis Brothers Landscaping employees will

take seasonal jobs at companies such as L.L. Bean and local snow removal companies.

"When they come in for the job interview, they know when the job is going to end and they prepare themselves," Lewis says. "As for myself, I try to recuperate. I like to travel. My favorite thing is to get away to New England's B&Bs and inns. I work a lot of hours for eight or nine months, so it's my time to enjoy."

Lewis says there's nothing he would have done differently over the years as his business strategy has proven to be effective in maintaining employees and clients.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is we did not go out and buy a bunch of stuff and have a really large debt," he says. "We acquired things as we could afford them."