

## Just the Right Size

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'.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is above the 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font.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 above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A registered trademark symbol (®) is to the right of the word.

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

Green Touch stays small to stay efficient

When clients of Green Touch get service from the Littleton, Colo.-based landscape installation and maintenance company, they're not just getting their lawn mowed, they're getting the benefit of owner Bud Ducey's experience managing sod farms and golf courses and his educational background.



Susan Ducey, owner of Green Touch, with the company's maintenance and landscape crew. Photos courtesy of Green Touch.

Ducey, who spent time as an arborist, received a bachelor's degree in horticulture with a dual concentration in turfgrass management and landscape and nursery management from Colorado State University. His career has taken him to the management of sod farms on the East and West coasts, serving such customers as Candlestick Park, Oakland Stadium and the vice presidential mansion in Washington, D.C. He returned to Colorado to work as an assistant superintendent at Lone Tree Golf Course, and then took a promotion as superintendent of Littleton Golf Course. He left South Suburban Parks to

serve as the assistant superintendent during construction and grow-in at the Sanctuary Golf Course, and in 1996, Ducey left the golf industry to start Green Touch.



Susan Ducey  
plants mums  
to spruce  
up  
containers  
for fall.



Bud Ducey,  
holding a  
flat of  
flowers,  
owner of  
Green Touch  
with his  
landscape  
and  
maintenance  
crew.

Ducey's wife Susan has a bachelor's degree in horticulture with a concentration in landscape design from Colorado State University and worked as a designer in retail nurseries, as well as for commercial installation companies. Green Touch does both landscape maintenance and installation, and their service region includes the Denver and Centennial areas.

The landscape maintenance program of the company includes weekly cutting, weekly trimming and biweekly lawn edging. The company's approach is based on cutting in different directions, mowing at 2.75 to 3 inches high, and mulching the clippings to help the lawn fill in and stay healthy throughout the growing season. Slow-release fertilizers that are half organic and half synthetic are used to enrich the soil's mineral content and microbial activity. The company provides five treatments of herbicides, spaced six to eight weeks apart, to remove weeds and help the grass fill in.

In spring and fall, Green Touch employees use a core aerator to relieve soil compaction and thatch buildup and allow water, air and nutrients to penetrate and stimulate the lawn. They leave the plugs on the lawn to redistribute soil, nutrients and microbes over time. The landscape maintenance program also includes property cleanup, spring lawn renovation, irrigation services, garden maintenance, insect and disease control, and shrub and small tree pruning. Ducey uses Toro Dingos and Horizon mowers.

Ducey embraces the industry's best management practices to benefit his clients. Those practices include quality soil preparation, setting up irrigation systems so they work for the client's needs in the yard, design layout and planting the proper plants for an irrigation layout, says Ducey.

"Some plants, for their water needs, shouldn't go together," he says.

"When I was trimming trees on anywhere from one to six properties a day, I saw a lot of residential landscapes that were in different phases of maturity and decline, so I've seen a lot of good work and a lot of bad work," he says. "I've gotten more opinionated about landscape design and what works and what doesn't, as well as with turfgrass."

Through his arborist and turfgrass experience, doing maintenance and then going into landscape construction, Ducey has developed a point of view as to what landscape construction should entail. "It should be something that lasts for a long time and works for a long time," he points out. "I like Kentucky bluegrass. I grew tall fescue right next to Kentucky bluegrass in the Tennessee Valley. Kentucky bluegrass avoids drought, whereas tall fescue resists drought. I believe if you're in a low water or drought situation, you're better off with Kentucky bluegrass in Colorado than you are with tall fescue." Ducey says his company's work is "not so much about the project as about what's going to work in the future."

Ducey likes working in the residential sector, and that there is an economy of scale when focusing on residential instead of commercial. "It's totally different when you have two people in a truck that pull up to do a residential house and when you do commercial, you might have four or five people," he says. "My two guys can make more money per hour doing residential than they can on a big commercial property. People appreciate us, and we have a bunch of our original customers. They understand what it takes to work for a living. They pay their bills and we have very few bad pays."

Green Touch has four to 12 employees, depending on seasonal needs. Ducey conducts bimonthly meetings during which he informs them of where the company stands in terms of meeting goals. Although crews are small, Ducey teaches his employees to be versatile and to do everything the company offers its clients. "All of my staff over the course of the summer learned landscaping to varying degrees," says Ducey. "In landscaping, some things are more technical than others, but they are skills that are in all landscape jobs and all lawn maintenance jobs, whether it's mowing or fertilizing or aerating. We explain the horticultural reasons behind the way we do things, as well as the production reasons."

Ducey realizes other landscape maintenance professionals may have a bigger bank balance than his company, but he "didn't get into the industry to be profit motivated." He and his wife prefer to keep their company small. Not only has it enabled them to balance work and family obligations, but they can also have face time with their customers. "My wife and I really enjoy the work," Ducey adds. "We get to do this and make money at it. By working hard, I was always able to make money. I got into the industry because my wife and I are artistic and because we really like nature." he says.

The two biggest impacts to his business in the past 15 years are the rising cost of health insurance and the rising cost of small engine repair. Ducey likes to run a piece of equipment or a truck until it becomes beyond repair. "We have a good mechanic," says Ducey. "We don't have a lot of leases. We're

thrifty that way.”



Bud and  
Susan  
Ducey,  
owners of  
Green  
Touch,  
Inc.

Water is the biggest challenge being faced in this industry, Ducey says, adding that the biggest barrier is getting people to realize the true value of water. “Water is going to be the gold standard,” he says. “There’s no doubt that within the next 100 years, water is going to be worth a lot. The sad thing is that even though we’re professionals in the landscape industry, it’s very difficult to educate homeowners about wise water use, because a lot of times they get offended when you try to tell them how to water their lawn. They get offended when you try to tell them that they don’t have to have a thick, lush lawn in the month of July.

“In Colorado, we use lawns in the spring and in the fall. In the heat of the summer, you’re not using them that much. The biggest challenge is educating the public and getting them to understand we’re not trying to curtail their rights or privileges, we’re just trying to help them manage grass better.”

Carol Brzozowski is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and has written extensively about environmental issues for numerous trade journals for more than a decade. She resides in Coral Springs, Fla.