

SourceOne Plugr

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Judson Irrigation has been designing, installing and servicing underground lawn sprinkler systems for over 39 years, and has been successful throughout the Lincoln and Omaha, Neb., areas. I was one of the first contractors in the nation to earn the title of certified irrigation designer (CID) for both residential and commercial systems from the National Irrigation Association.



Jason Merkel, a crew member at Judson Irrigation, tested the maneuverability of the SourceOne hydrostatic Plugr around the company's heavily landscaped front entry.

Photos by alan jackson, jackson photography.

Over the years, I had given a lot of thought to adding another service to the business. When the economy slowed for high-end irrigation services, it was time to get serious. The fall through early spring lull offered a time frame for opportunity; it was obvious turf aeration would be a good seasonal fit. Plus, I already flagged irrigation heads before aeration for many current customers, so why not offer aeration, too? This was another service to perform and another chance to be on the customer's yard to discover irrigation maintenance issues. My crews do maintenance work on all brands of irrigation systems, so this would make aeration both an additional service offered and a lead generator for maintenance work.



A Judson Irrigation crew member examines plugs pulled out of the ground by the Plugr's cam-driven tires.

Unlike some contractors who shop around, I went directly to SourceOne Outdoor Power Equipment. I like to buy locally whenever possible, and SourceOne equipment is manufactured in Lincoln. I bought through a local Lincoln dealer, Small Engine Specialists. The first purchase was a PLUGR PL800 Pro, and that 30-inch machine quickly had a companion, the 30-inch PLUGR PL855 Pro HD.

I might not have done brand comparisons because I already understood the benefits of the Plugr's cam-driven design. Plugrs are machines that pull plugs, they don't just punch holes. Our customers are happy; our crews like them, too.

The in-out Plugr tine motion produces less compaction on the inner surface of the hole than aerators with rotating designs and add-on weights. Reduced compaction and increased root exposure is the primary goal of aeration. I predict that first-time aeration customers will be even happier with their lawns when they see the improvements aeration adds to the effectiveness of watering and fertilization in the spring. One of my employees, Jason Merkel, has said that he likes the PL855's hydrostatic's speed for large areas, which gives really good control.

The crews use the PL855 PRO HD on turfgrasses and soils that are soft or spongy. Self-propulsion keeps the aerator moving forward, and a built-in quick-release receiver hitch allows the use of a StepSavr sulky.

We exceeded our first-year goals with this machine.

Think you've got what it takes to put some new gear through its paces? Can you write a complete sentence and craft a piece like this? Contact Editor Amy Hill at ahill@MooseRiverMedia.com to get your name on our list of Turf magazine Field Test experts!