

## **A Cut Above the Rest**

### ***Tips for Hiring a Dependable Lawn Care Service***

Would you like to spend your weekends pursuing your favorite hobby or spending time with family instead of working up a sweat in your yard? Are you sick of hassling with a mower that keeps breaking, a trimmer that keeps jamming, and a blower that does nothing but create a big cloud of dust? If so, hiring someone to provide lawn care services could be a worthwhile expense. Below are tips for hiring a dependable company to service your lawn:

#### **HOW TO GET REFERRALS**

-Your neighbors are probably your best source for referrals. You can see for yourself how good of a job the company does and you may even get a discount. Lawn care companies benefit from having their accounts in close proximity because it cuts down on time and fuel. So if you think your neighbor uses a company that meets your standards definitely give them a call and mention how you got their number.

-Ask your friends, relatives, co-workers, and other people you do business with. The referrals don't just have to be from other residential customers. Many lawn care companies that service commercial accounts provide residential services as well. If you notice your local bank has been using a lawn care company that provides good, reliable service, then get their name and number.

-Look in your phonebook to see if your area has some sort of home referral network (sometimes called HRN). They may be able to provide you with a list of lawn care companies whose references have been verified. This is provided at no cost to you. This can be especially helpful if you are new to the area.

#### **HOW TO HIRE ONE**

-Have someone come out and give you an estimate. They should actually take a look at your lawn and not just base their price on your lot size. Things like the amount of landscaping you have, fences to trim around, and a pool in the backyard which decreases the mowing area can all be factors when setting a price.

-Once they have given you the mowing rate, verify what that includes. Typically you will be getting a price for mowing, trimming and a general clean-up when they are done. Edging and leaf clean-up may be separate prices. Find out what exactly is included and if they offer additional services like mulching and landscaping.

-Don't be afraid to haggle on the price. Most lawn care companies are expecting this. Even getting them to come down \$5 a week can add up to big savings.

-Verify how often they will be providing the service. Typically this is once a week, but you want to make sure that weather and the condition of the lawn is always a factor. You don't want to get locked into paying for this service weekly only to have a period of drought and your lawn is too dry to be mowed.

-Ask if they carry insurance. It is not uncommon for property or vehicle damage to occur from the large mowers picking up and throwing around large rocks or sticks.

- Find out how often you be billed and what the payment instructions are. If the person servicing your lawn is an employee and not the actual owner then they may prefer that the payment is mailed instead of paid in person.
- Discuss where the servicing of your lawn will fall on their schedule. Ask if they will honor requests to change the service date for special occasions. For example, if your lawn is typically serviced on Thursday, but you are having a special gathering on Sunday and want to move the service date to Saturday for that week.
- Inquire as to the size of the business and how long they've been doing this. If it is a larger company they typically will be fairly consistent and professional, but you may have a harder time getting special requests honored. Always get the name of a contact person should the need arise. A smaller company or a one-man show may give your lawn that extra attention you asked for, but may suddenly stop showing up half-way through the season. Make sure the smaller company has a few years of experience and that this isn't something they're just trying out for the season.

### **HOW TO DO BUSINESS**

- Keep accurate records of the dates of service and payments made. It may be preferable to pay by check instead of cash or credit card (unless it is a large national company) and avoid prepaying.
- Monitor their professionalism. Are the workers speeding through your neighborhood with their large trucks and trailers? Are they making catcalls to your neighbor's teenage daughter? Do they seem trustworthy since they will have access to your property when you may not be home? If these become issues it is best to speak to someone in charge. If nothing is done about it you may need to find another service.
- Finally if you are happy with their service let them know. You can do this by paying promptly, including a tip and referring them to others.

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