

THE HOPPER

~ Grasshopper Periodical ~

SPRING.
SUMMER.
FALL.
WINTER.
GRASSHOPPER.



In this issue: Michael Ackerman, Michael's Complete Lawn Care
Don Nelson, Nelson Lawn Service
Brian Fraser, Greenlawn Landscaping Maintenance Co.

GRASSHOPPER
YOUR NEXT MOWER®



THE LONG ROAD TO SUCCESS

In 2000, Michael Ackerman was a 14-year-old with a growing mowing business in Wichita, Kan. He had 35 residential contracts, and his dream was to compete with the larger companies that dominated the market.

Now, in 2009, Michael's dream has become a reality.

"I'd say we're among the top five or six companies in Wichita, and for quality, I'd say we're number one."

Michael's Complete Lawn Care now has 20 employees providing services year-round: mowing, spring and fall cleanup, landscape installation and maintenance, tree service, fertilization programs and snow removal. His client list has also grown to 130 residential contracts, 10 homeowners associations and 75 commercial properties.

"You have to have a fair price for quality work, and you have to find the best employees and keep them happy. And you can't be afraid to get your hands dirty."

With nearly 120 acres to mow each week, Ackerman relies on Grasshopper to get the job done.

"For maneuverability, productivity and quality cut, Grasshopper mowers are the best." His fleet of four MidMount™ Model 227s is running an average of 20 hours – per machine – each week and he says Grasshoppers are dependable and require little maintenance.

"Even when there are issues – and that's not often – the machines aren't down long," which means the company's crews can stay productive, and Grasshopper's comfortable, smooth ride adds to the mix. "With other machines I've used, I'd be hurting at the end of the day."

"With the Grasshoppers, you can mow all day long and still feel fresh."

And Ackerman's employees have made it clear that they want to stick with Grasshopper. He makes it a point to listen to his employees

and invest in them just as he would his equipment.

"My employees are my most important asset. They're valuable, and when I invest in their success, they make themselves even more valuable by their performance." With the best equipment and the best employees, Ackerman can focus his efforts on delivering the best in quality and professional service.

He doesn't sell jobs; he sells quality. "High-quality work means professionalism, fairness, communication and problem-resolution. It's a difference our clients can see and experience."

For example, if he sees lines of clumps after mowing thick or wet grass, he makes sure to go over it again.

"I hate clumps. There can be no clumps," he says. "But Grasshoppers hardly leave a discharge trail. They help just as much with quality as they do with productivity. It's a complete package."

Focusing on quality is a strategy that has paid dividends for the company's growth. "We get referrals from our clients. Someone asks 'Who does your landscaping?' and they talk us up. Word-of-mouth is just as important as traditional advertising for us."

"When you do a good job, the work will come to you. You just have to make sure you deliver what you sell, and Grasshopper helps us do just that." ~



Michael Ackerman uses Grasshoppers for their quality of cut and dependability.

FOR “MR. GRASSHOPPER,” RETIREMENT IS BLISSFULLY BUSY

Don Nelson of Hildreth, Neb., has been using Grasshopper mowers for more than 30 years. He bought his first Grasshopper when he realized that he needed a better mowing solution than the lawn tractors he was using for his home and surrounding farm acreage.

“The lawn tractors were hard to control, they weren’t comfortable, and neither my wife nor my kids would go near them,” Nelson recalls. “So I looked for an alternative.”

He was drawn to Grasshopper because of the comfortable ride, zero-turn maneuverability and quality craftsmanship.

When Nelson bought his first Grasshopper, his kids gladly took care of the mowing, allowing him to devote his time and energy to working on his farm.

After years of waking at dawn and working past sundown, Nelson retired, but not in the traditional sense of the word; he started his own lawn mowing business: Nelson Lawn Service.

“I started when I was 65,” he says, “with one Grasshopper 620T mowing a couple of cemeteries and city yards. Being ‘retired,’ I only wanted to work half-days, so being small was great.”

But his business soon grew by leaps and bounds, which he attributes directly to using Grasshopper.

“I now have two mowers (the second is a new 729T) and have 12 cemeteries, 50 city yards and 11 country yards,” he says. “I’ve grown to where I require another person to help, and it’s all because of Grasshopper.”

He’s known around Hildreth as Mr. Grasshopper, a title he is proud to claim. “They’re all I’ve known and all I’ll ever use. I’ve been around a lot of equipment, and these mowers are far superior – in comfort, construction and maneuvering – to anything else I’ve seen.”

One of his previous Grasshoppers – a Model 1822 – was 22 years old when he replaced

it. The deck was rusted out, but the spindles and bearings were still working like new.

“Regular maintenance can keep equipment going for a long time. Grasshoppers are low-maintenance to begin with – and the PowerFold® deck makes them even easier to maintain. If you take the time to sharpen blades and perform regular maintenance like changing the oil and filters, you’ll make them last even longer.”

Nelson is also pleased with the maneuverability, which he says is especially helpful on his cemetery accounts.

“Mowing around the gravestones is a breeze. We eliminate a lot of secondary trimming. And they do really well in the open areas, as well.”

The QuikConverter™ implement system has been helpful to Nelson. He uses the

620T for trimming and mowing in the summer, a snowthrower in the winter, and the AERA-vator™ is perfect for aerating the school football fields and lawns in the spring and fall. His 729T is fitted with a PowerVac™ collector, since most of his clients request clippings and leaf collection.

“I had one superintendent tell me they had the best grass they’ve ever had after I aerated one year, and he specifically asked me to return the next year to do it again,” Nelson says. “And when you do a quality job with a quality product, the word travels.”

That word-of-mouth has traveled so far that Nelson requires little traditional advertising. “Most of my growth has been through word-of-mouth, and I never turn down work, especially in this down economy.”

Even though his business has grown beyond the half-day schedule, the speed and convenience of his Grasshopper mowers allow him the flexibility to adjust his schedule whenever and however he chooses, leaving him plenty of time to enjoy his “retirement.” ~



Don “Mr. Grasshopper” Nelson has been a Grasshopper owner for more than 30 years.

RELIABILITY AND DURABILITY EVERY SEASON OF THE YEAR

Long hours and hard work take their toll on workers and equipment alike. But for Brian Fraser, owner of Greenlawn Landscaping Maintenance Co. in Farmington Hills, Mich., the days are easier with his fleet of Grasshopper mowers.

Greenlawn specializes in large condominium apartment complexes, and each of the 42 complexes, with an average of 30 acres, is mowed approximately 26 times every mowing season.

"With more than 1,200 acres, our mowers have to be up to the challenge," he says. "We have 15 Grasshoppers – 12 928D and three 322D models – and they're the best investments we ever made."

Fraser started using Grasshoppers 13 years ago when he used one as a temporary replacement. "We liked it so much, we just kept it. Eventually, we phased out our other machines and went strictly to Grasshoppers."

Fraser uses Grasshoppers because of their performance and durability. "We run each

machine at least 40 hours a week, and we put more than 1,000 hours on them per year. They just keep going."

The diesel engine is what Fraser likes most, though. "At first, I hesitated to switch from gasoline to diesel, but the power, durability and fuel-efficiency of these engines can't be beat. Even with the higher price of diesel fuel, the benefits of diesels are greater. Switching back to gasoline is just not an option."

Fraser also likes that Grasshoppers require little continued maintenance and incur less downtime for repairs.

"Maintenance on a Grasshopper is usually minimal. That gives us more time in the field to do our work, and time is everything."

Fraser points out that even though his crews work hours-on-end each day, Grasshopper's

smooth ride makes the work less tiresome and more comfortable. "You can ride them all day long and you won't feel beat up at the end of the day. That makes it easier to do the same thing the next day."

With his business in Michigan, Fraser's fleet of Grasshoppers keeps running from season to season.

"In the summer, we're mowing. In the fall, we're bagging leaves – and the bagger attachment is the best we've ever used. That saves us from hours of back-breaking work bagging up leaves," he says.

When the snow falls, Fraser is out clearing snow from sidewalks, driveways and parking lots at the condo complexes. "We have maybe 15 to 20 snows and average 45 inches of snow each year."

Fraser uses four snowthrowers for deeper snow and four blades for the smaller storms. "We have several sites with several miles of walks, and the V-plow has proven to be by far the fastest method of clearing them."

Even with all the hard work and long hours, his Grasshoppers still perform like they did the day they joined his fleet.

"And when it's time to retire a mower, they still have a good resale value, even with 5,000 to 6,000 hours. Overall, there are just more incentives to stick with Grasshopper," he says.

In fact, Fraser had the opportunity to switch to a competing mower line, but after test-driving the competitive models, each of Fraser's four foremen decided unanimously not to switch, citing Grasshopper's superior comfort, quality of cut, vacuum collection and snow removal capabilities.

"When it comes to performance and durability, you can't find anything better."

With all the benefits, it's easy to see why Fraser continues to use Grasshopper season after season, year after year. ~



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