



Several years after forming his lawn care company in 1989, **Brent A. Flory** participated on a panel at the first-ever Green Industry Conference, sharing his experiences with natural, biological products and practices. Today, he and his wife run a million-dollar-plus, full-service company in Delphi, IN.

How has your agricultural background and belief in natural processes for plant health care shaped your approach to turf care and landscape services. I raised acres of truck crops sold wholesale and ran into many difficulties with soil and plant conditions related to soil conditions. Through this, I became involved in the agriculture fertilizer and consulting business.

I developed a strong belief in natural soil amendments and fertilizing techniques, including a biological approach to soil and plant health. Many of these ideas have influenced my approach to lawn care and management. I became an advocate of using aerobically formed compost. This is the cornerstone of my approach to turf and soil health.

Which of your services have been affected most by the recession and which have been affected least. Construction, irrigation and landscaping have declined significantly. People seem to be spending money on primary maintenance services.

What changes do you plan to make for the coming season?

Changes are focused on pricing services, improving efficiency with those services and reducing overhead. This means working for less money in some service areas. We want improved efficiency and better managed overhead to help offset less gross dollars. This will mean being more productive in the field and extra hours for management. Our goal is not to reduce jobs for our employees.

What are the biggest changes since the company's founding?

There's greater awareness and emphasis on landscape. People are turning their back yards into beautiful back lawns. A second difference is the increase of service companies providing maintenance services.

What do you foresee in 2010?

I'm optimistic. We changed

our pricing structure and picked up nice, new properties. We're going to have to work harder and do a bit more, but we're looking forward to a profitable year.

If you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?

Finding good people, for growth and solid business from the start. I'd have spent more time and money on personnel. This is much easier said than done. Good people are the key to growth and business. As long as the population grows, there are new job opportunities and people required for this industry. There's never enough experienced people. So, there's always a need for training and recruiting. The search never stops for good people, even when you're fully staffed. It has been a difficult process to cash flow a business, find good people and grow at the same time.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Freedom Lawns, Inc., Delphi, IN

FOUNDED: 1989

OWNERS: Brent and Marilyn Flory

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: One

EMPLOYEES: 25 to 35

SERVICES: Mowing, fertilization, weed control, pruning, mulching, landscape construction, paver patio/walk installation, irrigation install/maintenance, water gardens, landscape lighting, retaining walls, Bush Hog, vegetation control, snow removal

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: PLANET, Tippecanoe Apartment Association, Midwest Regional Turfgrass Foundation, Snow & Ice Management Association

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS/HOBBIES: Piloting his four-passenger Beechcraft, motorcycling, weight training, spending time with family and friends

FAMILY: Five grown children, one grandchild

WEBSITE: FreedomLawns.com

“ I BECAME AN ADVOCATE OF USING **AEROBICALLY FORMED COMPOST**. THIS IS THE CORNERSTONE OF MY APPROACH TO TURF AND SOIL HEALTH.”