

BETTER PRACTICES: PROPER GRADING



Good edging contributes to improvements in both aesthetics and safety.

“I’ve fallen several times myself and have seen others fall also,” says Rotz, whose business does about 70% residential work. “I never want to be blamed for someone falling because of my shoddy work, so I always put in the extra time to do proper grading. Unfortunately, I have lost a lot of seeding jobs because of this problem through cost differences. I always dig the areas out and place good soil to make sure it is properly graded and not a fall hazard. Yet, it seems like I am always laughed at for it — and it never seems to matter since ‘everyone else’ leaves a dangerous edge. I see this not only in sidewalks, but in the islands of business and shopping centers.”

Rotz says this has been a pet peeve of his for years, yet it never seems to be a problem to anyone else. “Most people say ‘I can’t see it from my house, so I don’t

Impress customers and reduce the risk of falling with proper grading.

BY **CASEY PAYTON**

Harry R. Rotz Jr., owner of Rotz Turf Renovation LLC in Chambersburg, PA, says it’s not enough to put up warning or “No Trespassing” signs in areas where sidewalks weren’t edged properly. He’d like to see proper grading done the first time around. But the seeming lack of interest in this issue has always bugged him, especially from a safety point of view.

care,” he says. “Or maybe people just don’t think about it because it’s been done wrong for so long that it’s just taken for granted.”

But Rotz says there are a few good reasons to start thinking about proper grading. Besides being a fall hazard and ultimate liability, poor grading is also not friendly to the environment. “If good soil is placed to grade correctly, it not only makes the job pretty, but it can help control erosion,” he says. “The healthier the grass, the more oxygen is produced — and the more carbon is sequestered. It takes less labor, gas and chemicals to maintain the area.”

Proper grading can also make long-term maintenance easier and more cost-efficient.

“[When done properly,] all you need to

continued on page 46

GRADING

continued from page 44

do is run the wheel of the mower on the edge along these areas and you're done!" he says. "There's little or no trimming. There is less time spent going back with a string trimmer to clean up those spots. Also, if the person running the mower is instructed properly, there is no scalping to the grass

area and no damage to the mower."

Because Rotz always does this extra work, he says his prices do end up higher.

"It does take more time and effort, and everyone expects to be paid for their time so it's certainly an extra cost," Rotz admits. "Sometimes I don't get the work because my estimate is higher.



Help customers see the value in grading. Talk to them about the benefits.

'Under-valued' is the understatement of the century. But anyone whose heart is in it and is trying to

do a good job knows his reputation is always on the line. The low-bidders are here today and gone on to something else tomorrow. Fortunately, I've been blessed with work, so my effort seems to be working."

Though he's been frustrated by a lack of regard for this important issue, Rotz says sometimes clients do recognize the extra effort he puts in, and why he's doing it.

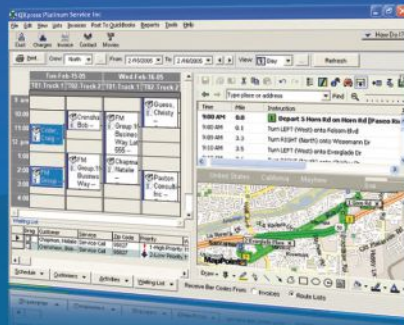
"Most of the time it's the little guy that appreciates it," he says. "Many of the big guys just don't care — they want to do whatever they can to keep the cost down. But if it's the owner, I like to talk to them about the benefits. Then I can point to all the pros taking the time to do it right — how it will save them years down the road in maintenance costs, and the liability issues from lawsuits related to fall hazards. It's all about being able to see past the end of your nose and trying to make safety the top issue from the start, which will, in turn, also leave a more appealing job." **LM**

Payton is a freelance writer with six years' experience covering landscaping.



If you use QuickBooks...
QXpress is the Software for You!

- Cuts office time in half!
- Increases Productivity
- Easier Scheduling, Job Costing & Invoicing



Rated #1 scheduling software by QuickBooks users!*

Pricing Starting At

\$38/month

Go To QXpress.com/landscape

To Get A Free Trial!

Contact Us At 1-888-QXPRESS
or www.QXpress.com/landscape

* As determined by searching on <http://marketplace.intuit.com> for "Scheduling Software," and sorting by the "Rating" option. As of December, 2010 QXpress Scheduling Software had the highest rating.

QuickBooks and "Designed for QuickBooks" Logo are trademarks of Intuit Inc., displayed with permission. The use by Marathon Data Systems does not signify certification or endorsement of the QXpress software by Intuit, and Marathon Data Systems is solely responsible for its software and the support and maintenance of the software

© 2010 Marathon Data Systems, LLC. All rights reserved.

Designed for:

