

Paint it green

Turf painting could be a solution for customers who want a quick fix.

MANY HOMEOWNERS ACROSS the country this year saw their turf die or turn yellow thanks to scorching temperatures and unceasing drought. Some people looking for a solution turned to lawn painting as a quicker, cheaper fix than complete lawn overhauls.

Brian Howland, founder and president of Arizona Lawn Painting in Phoenix, runs this business as a part-time gig to supplement his full-time sales job for a digital printing firm.

"There's not a lot of repeat business with this type of work," he says, noting it makes a nice part-time service. "A lot of my clients are people who have rental properties and just don't want to deal with the hassle of renovating their yard or homeowners who are about to be fined by their HOA because of yellow grass. But I do have a few regular clients with larger properties who find this to be a convenient solution to their problems."

On average, Howland charges \$200 for up to 3,000 square feet of property and also may charge a travel fee, depending on the customer's location and travel time. A typical yard takes him about an hour to paint, but obstacles in the yard can involve more time and therefore drive up the fee. If there are a lot of items that have to be sprayed around, the job gets more complicated.

"The more things in their yard, the more the price goes up," he says. "The green paint is permanent, so you have to be very cognizant about where you're spraying it."

Howland says customers seem to appreciate that it's a relatively inexpensive service that offers a quick solution. "The truth is, it's not really something you need, and it only takes me an hour, so I think it's worth my while to make somewhere around \$200," Howland says. "It's a nice little side business."

There isn't a lot of equipment involved, so Howland says the investment in a lawn painting business is relatively low. Any company that has a lawn or pest control division may already have the appropriate spray equipment; lawn colorant is the only other material required.

Howland uses a product called Natural Green Grass Patch. He buys direct, but he



Brian Howland charges about \$200 for a 3,000-square-foot yard, which takes him about an hour to paint.

says paint can be sourced from landscape supply distributors or websites.

Howland went through some trial and error to find the best spray tank to lay the paint down evenly. He tried an orchard sprayer and some other equipment, but he was fortunate to have friends in the pest control business who gave him an old spray tank, which he says has been the best solution he's found.

"I've probably invested about \$500 of my own money for materials like hosing, fittings and wiring, so it's certainly not a big investment," Howland says. "The lawn paint is the biggest ongoing investment, and it's not that expensive."

Howland used to have his vehicle partially wrapped, which solicited a lot of calls, but he says most of his business now comes from Internet leads. He says many people don't know what lawn painting is, but they find him online when trying to find a quick solution for a dead lawn. Howland says he is the only professional lawn painter in his region.

There's nothing like making a customer happy, Howland says. "You can take a lawn that was completely yellow and turn it into this lush green turf in an hour," he says. "I just recently did a job where the customer walked out after I was done and all he could say was, 'Wow.' That definitely made me feel good about what I do."

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

» SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: Arizona Lawn Painting

HEADQUARTERS: Phoenix

WHY LAWN PAINTING: An article about a guy doing lawn painting in California caught Howland's attention. Having recently quit a job, he was looking for a way to make money, and the business idea made sense.

INVESTMENT: A spray tank system plus lawn paint