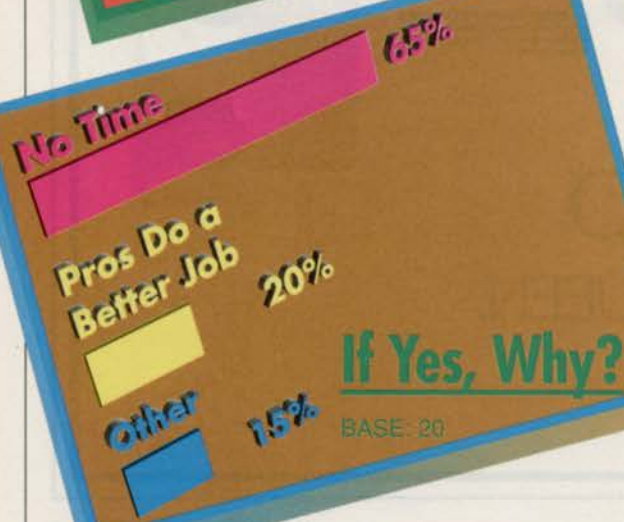


19 of 20 Cleveland, Ohio, homeowners rate their lawn or landscape service as

'good' or 'excellent.'

B+



■ The nation's lawn care and landscape services are generally pleasing their customers, according to a mini-survey commissioned by LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT magazine.

Our telephone survey questioned 62 homeowners in selected areas of Cleveland, Ohio. Neighborhoods with higher per capita earnings were chosen for the survey, on the perception that people living in those neighborhoods are more likely to contract a lawn or landscape service.

Twenty of the respondents who subscribe to either a lawn care or landscape service were the basis for most of the in-depth questions. And, though the survey base was small and not geographically diverse, overall trends become immediately apparent.

Nine of the 20 subscribers gave their services a grade of "A" for excellent. An additional 10 gave grades of "B," or good, for overall service.

Finding a service—Referrals have always been (and probably always will be) an important source of business for lawn/landscape service companies. Fifty-five percent of those getting services said the company they used was recommended by their neighbor.

Direct mail also had an effect on our respondents: 35 percent contracted a service after receiving a brochure or coupon in the mail. Only one respondent made the call

after spotting a company's truck on the street.

About two-thirds of the homeowners who subscribe to a lawn/landscape service said that it is because they do not have enough time to do it themselves. About one-fifth of the respondents said they realized that professionals can do a better job than what they could do.

Grading out—The perception among lawn care and landscape businesses is that customers are very demanding of timely service, especially with the first signs of spring. This creates a spring rush that usually entails long hours on the job. Yet, among the qualities surveyed, timeliness is the most admired by customers. A full 60 percent of those surveyed gave a grade of "A" for excellent in the "timely" category. An additional 35 percent gave a "B."

Professional lawn/landscape companies also rated fairly high in:

- expertise,
- communication with customers,
- problem-solving and
- creating a lawn that is better than before the customer started the service.

Overall, lawn/landscape companies did well in every category, although 10 percent of the respondents gave them Ds in "personnel" and "value."

Why, why not?—Six of the 20 respondents said they started the service because the yard was too difficult to take care of

A Excellent **B** Good

C Average **D** Poor

EXPERTISE
Do they seem to know what they are doing?

COMMUNICATION
Do they take the time to explain their services to you, either in person or by mail?

TIMELINESS
Do they make their visits either when they say they will, or when you want them to?

PERSONNEL
Does your technician/landscaper seem knowledgeable and proficient at the job?

PLEASE GRADE YOUR LAWN/LANDSCAPE COMPANY IN THESE AREAS:

PROBLEM-SOLVING
If or when you have a problem with either the company or your lawn, is it handled quickly and efficiently?

VALUE
Are you getting your money's worth?

SATISFACTION
Does your lawn/landscape look better than it did before you had the service?

SATISFACTION
Does your lawn/landscape meet your current expectations?

Source:
LM mini-survey

themselves, though there was a wide disparity on other reasons for starting the service.

One respondent claimed his yard had "no major problems—I just wanted to make sure there were none (in the future)." Another "wanted a professional so I would not ruin it."

Of the 67.7 percent of the homes not receiving professional lawn/landscape care, 78.6 claimed to be "do-it-yourselfers." Just 4.8 percent—two of 42—claimed that environmental concerns were what kept them from starting such a service.

The three responses in the "other"

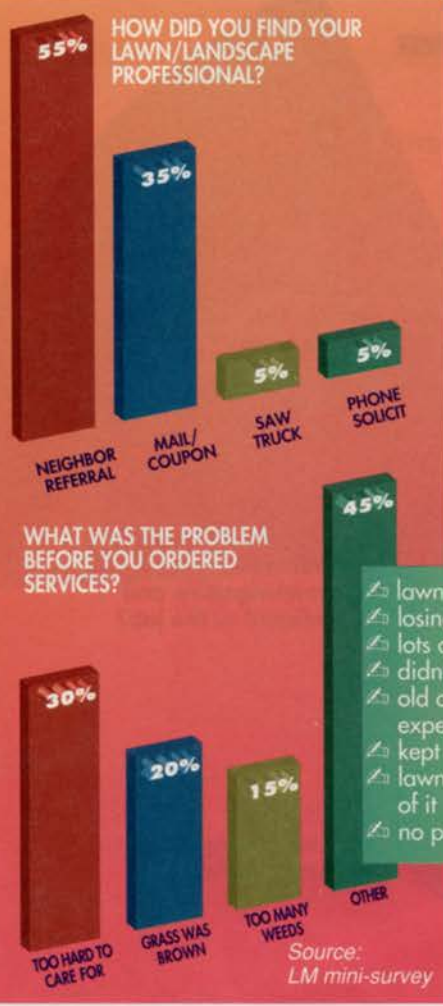
One of the respondents voiced this complaint: 'We had it one year, and spent money on something we could have done ourselves, cheaper and with fewer problems.'

category were: "My son does it like a pro;" "We live in the country and do not like a manicured lawn;" "We had it one year, and spent money on something we could have done ourselves, cheaper and with fewer problems."

—Jerry Roche, Terry McIver

NOTE: This survey was not designed to measure the market saturation of lawn/landscape services in any particular area. It is based on random phone calls within selected neighborhoods.—Ed.

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Homeowners like recycling clippings

■ Ninety-one percent of homeowners surveyed in Greenfield, Wis. would recommend the city's "Don't-Bag-It" lawn care program to others.

According to the survey, commissioned by BFI Town & Country Waste Service, 57 percent of the respondents also said their lawns improved since starting on the plan. In addition, 42 percent reported saving a

combined total of nine hours each mowing.

"This is extremely encouraging," says Mayor James Besson, who

strongly supported the experimental program. "I've received numerous calls from other Wisconsin community leaders about this program, and now I have instructive,

and positive information to provide them."

Thirty-three respondents to the survey said they have told more than 355 others about the program. Of those 33, 32 reported passing on positive comments. The one negative comment came from a homeowner who prefers to compost.

Other key responses to the survey:

- 42% said they saved time each mowing; 47% said mowing time is the same.
- 14% mow less often; 63% reported the frequency as being the same.
- 55% who did not mulch at all before now mulch all of their lawns.
- 82% watered their lawns less often or the same.

In exchange for recycling their grass clippings and for meeting other guidelines, the survey participants received free use of new Toro Recycler mowers through distributor R.L. Ryerson; and a season's supply of slow-release fertilizer manufactured by Howard Johnson's Enterprises of Milwaukee.

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