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business for Robertson and his lawn care company. In addition to Robertson, Curb Appeal consists of 7 to 10 part-time employees. All, with just two exceptions, are also volunteer fire fighters.

One of the exceptions is a county deputy sheriff. The other is a local high school senior that Robertson selects each season to learn the business. Last year's student employee is in college and now a volunteer fire fighter also.

Curb Appeal provides mowing, pruning, mulching and light installation and other maintenance services in central and northern

Stafford County, a county of about 75,000 people. It's located on the north side of the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg, and about 30 miles south of Washington D.C.

The area is rich in history. George Washington's boyhood home is nearby, along with sites of important Civil War battles. But, it's not too rich to live in. In fact, Stafford has become one of the communities of choice for career firefighters from larger communities in the northern Virginia/Washington metropolitan area.

The need is there—Robertson says as the community grew and became more prosperous, so did its need for a top-notch lawn care provider.

"There is an abundance of gypsy mowers and individuals out here with a pickup truck, weedeater, and blower. They have little or no background in the business,"

says Robertson.

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Robertson. The unique schedules of career fire fighters allows Curb Appeal to fill this growing demand for reliable lawn care services. "The fire fighters and law enforcement personnel make excellent employees," says Robertson. The fire burned eight acres of woods and two storage sheds but was contained before it reached three large homes. Fire fighters were at the site for three hours. There were no injuries.



Fire fighters and law enforcement personnel already know how to deal with clients.

Robertson. "They're highly responsible. They know how to deal especially well with clients. They know how to work with and, in many instances, repair the equipment on the job site.

"They take pride in their appearance and project an exceptional image for the company."

What happens when Curb Appeal technicians get an emergency call that they must answer?

They secure the equipment, head for the fire station, get on the apparatus and respond, explains Robertson. When they're finished with the emergency, they put the fire fighting equipment back in service, then return to finish the lawn maintenance task.

Ready for action—For example, last fall Robertson and three other technicians were pruning trees at the county government

reached three large homes. Fire fighters were at the site for three hours. There were no injuries. The technicians don't respond to every call. Some calls, by their nature, are routine and handled by other volunteers, says Robertson.

But, when they're needed, they respond to emergencies whether it's an infant locked in a car or the freeing of a trapped accident victim.

"Our clients are understanding," says Robertson. "We work our jobs on a contractual basis, not by hourly rates."

It's not uncommon on a work day to see Curb Appeal respond to an emergency still dressed in their Curb Appeal shirts and baseball caps, says Robertson.

—Ron Hall

New, bright colors for a new season

With so many ornamental varieties on the market, it's easy to give commercial properties a completely new look every season.

■ Seasonal color displays can make a commercial development stand apart from all others.

Perimeter Center, a 400-acre suburban office and retail complex in north central Atlanta, demonstrates how color can be changed each season for a new look. Vibrant color combinations in mass plantings and the use of a central color theme give the Perimeter Center landscape its vitality and eye appeal.

Each year new varieties renew interest

in the landscape.

The fall flower varieties are more limited, primarily, pansies, violas, parsley; thyme; mustard; kale; snapdragons and bulbs.

In plain view—Since flower color draws attention, the location of the beds on the property is also important.

Most of the beds at Perimeter Center are located in prominent areas along the main drive, at the base of pylons that mark

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the entrances into the park and at building entryways.

During installation, there are three crews of four employees assigned to flower work. In May, about 48,000 summer flowers are installed in more than 60,000 square feet of bed space.

In October, about 66,000 fall flowers and 62,000 bulbs are installed in the same beds after they have been thoroughly prepared. Flower bed sizes range from 50 to 4000 ft. Additionally, there are 85 flower containers located strategically at building fronts which are also changed out seasonally.

In the past few years several select areas have been chosen for perennial flower displays, such as in courtyards, roadsides and at signs.

Varieties such as *peony*, *dianthus*, *iberis*, *rudbeckia*, *helianthus*, *iris* and *coreopsis* are used as perennials, as are ornamental grasses and ferns.

A floriculturist is employed year-round for flower maintenance: weed and pest control, irrigation, fertilization and dead-heading.

In the summer of 1994, Perimeter



Favorite varieties around Perimeter Center include *helichrysum*; *balcon geraniums*; *amaranthus* and *eucalyptus*.

Center tenants were given a special tour through the park. A shuttle bus was used

to transport the group during the lunch hour to various flower beds. At each stop the varieties were identified and maintenance and use was discussed.

Something new each year—Every year brings something new in the way of color and design. New varieties of woody ornamentals are introduced as are new flower varieties. In the past few years the following plants have been incorporated in planting designs: *buddleia*; *cphalotaxus*; *chionanthus*; *chitalpa*; *fothergilla*; *raphiolepis*; *itea*; *loropetalum*; *stewartia*; *styrax*.

Installation is done by local landscaping firms.

Once the plant material and irrigation system are in place, the Taylor & Mathis landscape staff assumes the maintenance responsibility.

Ornamental plant maintenance includes seasonal pruning, deep-root fertilization, pest monitoring, irrigation until establishment and remulching twice a year.

Perimeter Center was developed by Taylor & Mathis, a real estate development and brokerage firm with offices in Atlanta; Birmingham, Ala.; and Miami. **LM**

'Eco' rose finally arrives

Nationwide retail marketing is already under way for the rose, described by its suppliers as 'the environmental rose' because of its resistance to black spot and mildew.

■ The August release of the patented ground cover rose, Flower Carpet, var. *Noastraum*, will give landscape pros another colorful tool.

Nationwide retail marketing is already under way for the rose, described by its suppliers as "the environmental rose" because of its resistance to black spot and mildew.

Werner Noack, a German rose breeder, spent 25 years developing the rose. It received a gold medal in the All Deutschland Rose trials in Germany in

1990. It was introduced in Europe, New Zealand and Australia in 1991-1994.

The Flower Carpet is an iridescent, rose-pink groundcover rose which, say suppliers:

✓ will grow in U.S.D.A. climate zones

2b-11 (Calgary, Canada to Miami, Fla.).

✓ can be planted anytime during spring, summer and fall.

✓ is a low, dense, compact bush, measuring, when mature, 24 to 36 inches tall and about three feet across.

✓ produces flower clusters 6-8 inches in diameter (with about 18 flowers per cluster).

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