



Sam Lang grew up in a small Georgia town located midway between Augusta and Macon. He earned degrees in economics and agronomy from the University of Georgia — and in 1984, was recruited by and worked for Orkin Lawn Care, headquartered in Atlanta. Looking north (but not too far north), Lang saw opportunity in North Carolina's Triangle region, and that's where he established his lawn care company in 1989.

Sam, your company is in its 20th year. How are you celebrating your milestone?

We are a close-knit group here at Fairway Green, and we plan to have a family and employee celebration after the seeding season.

You grew up in Georgia and are a proud graduate of the University of Georgia. What possessed you to build your business in and around Raleigh, NC?

The decision to open in Raleigh was based on demographics. The Triangle area had a highly educated population with a high- to medium-income level. The Research Triangle Park area had experienced tremendous growth in high-tech jobs. IBM was based here, and the bio-tech industry was beginning to establish itself. All of this growth was enhanced by the presence of the University of North Carolina, Duke University and North Carolina State University. Growth was happening — and future growth seemed certain.

Your market is in the so-called transition zone, and has just about every species of turfgrass imaginable. What kind of challenge is that to your company?

Common Bermuda was brought here from Africa in the 1700s, and there is a lot of that. Before the recent economic turn-down of last fall, about 600 people a week were moving to the Triangle. A large percentage of these newcomers were moving here from more northern states, and were accustomed to Kentucky bluegrass lawns. We've had a challenge educating them about the types of grass that grow well here. We also have to provide them with realistic expectations in regard to the services we provide.

Over the years, you have been a big supporter of the turfgrass program at North Carolina State University. How has

that relationship benefited you and your company?

Having a close relationship with NC State has been a huge factor in the growth of Fairway Green, and it has enhanced our credibility. Dr. Fred Yelverton and the entire faculty have been a valuable resource for us. Being able to call on some of the best scientists in the turfgrass industry for help is unique, and gives confidence to the customers we serve.

How would describe your involvement with Fairway Green today?

I remain very involved in the daily operations of Fairway Green. I have been fortunate to have a management team that allows me to pursue other interests outside of the company. For example, my wife, Carolyn, and I own farms and are venturing into the livestock business.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Fairway Green, Raleigh, NC

FOUNDED: 1989

PRINCIPAL: Sam Lang, president

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 2

SERVICE AREA: Raleigh and surrounding counties, Charlotte and surrounding region

EMPLOYEES: 26

SERVICES OFFERED: traditional and organic fertilization, tree and shrub care, ornamental bed weed control, insect and disease control, fire ant control, aeration and slit seeding, sports fields service

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: board member and past president of the Turfgrass Council of North Carolina (1992-2002); board member of PLCAA (1996-1998); helps secure funding for the NCSU Center for Turfgrass Environmental Research and Education

HOBBIES: bird hunting, training dogs, raising livestock, and family travel

FAMILY: wife, Carolyn, sons Max and Cormac, and daughter Walker Rose

WEBSITE: FairwayGreen.com

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