



March 20, 2009

Here comes a Spring to remember! Every time I begin a newsletter, I sit here for a few minutes trying to be sure I don't say something cheesy like 'Spring has sprung'. For the first time in nearly 30 years I can safely summarize exactly what you want from me this year. That is value. That wasn't always everybody's first concern, but just take a look around. These are very difficult times. We all need to adjust. That is easy for us here at Grass Helper. We have a solid foundation and we have always gone with the motto of "slow and steady wins the race".

There are a number of ways for both of us to keep your cost down this year. Most of our cost management responsibilities are done through our advanced scheduling process. Over the past few years we have implemented new scheduling and service software, upgraded to live vehicle gps and added a few lighter weight vehicles. This year we are in the process of adding layout diagrams to all service forms. This will take a lot of guesswork out of a service call, therefore saving time and money. We are also cutting the administrative cost of looking for new work. This time was coming soon anyway. We will be very happy to give you our complete and undivided attention.

We also promise to keep our prices real. There are so many contractors that use smoke and mirror pricing. Most great deals will end up costing you more in the long run. The basic tricks involve over priced material cost. I have seen invoices charging \$90.00 for a \$5.00 part. Having knowledgeable technicians helps too.

Speaking of efficiency and keeping cost down, have you given us your email address yet? You will notice some new preferences on the new agreement, including billing format. Email helps us to be more efficient in numerous ways. Don't worry. We will not abuse it. It will be used only for professional correspondence only. No junk mail, cheesy sales promotions, Happy Groundhog Day Greeting etc. We will not share it with anybody.

Last year most of our newsletter was dedicated to back flow device testing. That letter is still up on our website if you would like to review it. **It is very important that we have the name of your water provider. Please be sure that space is filled in correctly on your agreement.** Here are the facts to date.

- Every sprinkler system that draws water from a private well or city water source should have a backflow prevention device. Most do.
- If you use the public water supply, by law your device must be tested every year.
- If you are on a well, you should seriously consider having it tested anyway.
- Last year nearly 30 percent of devices failed, but most only needed minor repairs to be made to pass. That is why you should also approve the \$25.00 worth of parts.

- Testing is treated as a separate service because it requires special training, special equipment and requires a lot of behind the scene paperwork.
- A few water providers, including Aquarian and Groton will not accept our test results; you will need to be sure that they take care of it for you.
- If you look in the backflow testing section on your agreement, your status should give you the answers that you need to select your service option.
- Last year, during winterization we added a part to your device that will help minimize air related damage to the device.
- Every testable device includes 2 or 4 test ports. During the winterization process, the test ports are bled. They will need to be inspected when the water is turned back on.
- The State requires that these devices be tested. The water provider sets the rules from there. We will work with your provider.
- The MDC requires that the device be tested before the sprinkler system is activated. They take it very seriously.

For those of you who turn your own system on, there will be a few changes to how you do it. Both pertain to the backflow device. The first new thing to do is to be sure the test ports are closed all of the way. This will require using a small screwdriver to turn the ball valve in the side of the test port. The second thing is to be sure that the second ball valve is open all of the way. It may be half closed.

I don't like the term "being green". It is an overused politically correct term. I do like the idea though. I was green before it was fashionable. Back then it was called being cheap. While you will never catch me riding my bike to work, I do go out of my way to minimize my impact. It's easy to make a difference by refusing a bag for a single item, consolidating your car trips, heat down, a.c. up, lights off, refilling water bottles with perfectly good tap water and planning ahead. You can make a big difference with your lawn. Here are some examples. Check the website for more. www.grasshelper.com

1. Postpone watering if rain is eminent. Most controllers offer a delay feature.
2. Be sure that you have a rain sensor. They work well and have come a long way.
3. Change your controller program around the seasons. It takes a few minutes.

We are looking forward to working with you this year. Remember to rate your service experience through our website. That information goes right to me wherever I am. We wish you all the best and look forward to seeing you this year.

Ken McCartney

President
Grass Helper Lawn Care Inc.