

Lawn Technician

## **Overview**

First and foremost your job is to WOW the client. Your job is to provide service to the best of your ability and represent the company the best you can. You are not just representing the company, but you are representing Jim Zylstra. We have high moral standards and need to do the right thing at all times. Make the client's lawn the best it can possibly be with the water that it receives. Make recommendations to the client about proper mowing and watering. Exceed the client's expectations by rolling their trash cans to the house if they are empty, move children's toys and pet toys out of your way, and present them with their newspaper if it is on their step or in their bushes. Our end goal is to make every client happy enough that they will refer their friends and neighbors to us and write a review about us on the internet.

Your secondary objective is to help the company grow. We grow our company by 2 ways: new clients and up selling additional clients more services. By providing great service our clients will refer us, but we still need you to ask the client for referrals. Make suggestions to clients to solve problems like wasp nests, mosquitoes, moles, over seeding, aeration, and grub control. Don't assume our clients know all the services we offer. Always thank the client for their business.

Your job is to continue learning more about equipment repairs and maintenance, lawn diseases, and best horticultural practices. We will do our best to provide you with these opportunities, but we do expect you to look for educational opportunities.

Know the policies in the company handbook.

## **Preparation for the day**

Fill out the production board every morning.

Read and initial notes on the whiteboard in office.

Insure truck has proper condition code flyers, envelopes, posting signs, a pen, and plastic bags.

Insure truck has all the materials and equipment needed for the day.

Clean the truck on outside if it is dirty.

Clean the trailer or rack that carries the equipment.

Pick up all trash on the inside of the truck.

Make sure spill kit is complete.

Make sure equipment is properly secured and truck is equipped with extra straps.

Make sure truck has proper rubber boots, gloves, goggles, and respirator.

Make sure truck has proper tools and commonly broken spare parts.

Make sure tires on truck and equipment are properly inflated.

Pick up tools before leaving the shop.

Clean up spills and trash before leaving the shop.

Fill out daily inspection sheet as you going through the list.

Make sure equipment is properly running.

Make sure you have all products and tools on the truck that you need for the day.

Turn off the lights and close the overhead door.

Other than the white board and production board, most of these things can be done at the end of the day.

We would like to see everyone on the road within 10 minutes of punching in for the day.

## **Out in the field**

All accounts need to have the caution keep off the grass signs posted at every entrance point for every application.

Drive responsibly

**As of 1/1/2012 NO TALKING OR TEXTING ON CELL PHONE WHILE DRIVING**

Leave phones in the truck so that they are not a distraction while on the lawn or talking to the client.

Only use phones for personal calls or texts if it is an emergency or arranging for a ride home, unless you are in a rain delay.

Read and reply to texts from the office. Even if you only reply with “k”, at least we know you read the text.

Keep uniforms tucked in and as clean as possible. Carry an old tee shirt along in case you have to work on equipment. If a scrubby shirt is not available, do not work on equipment with company jacket or sweatshirt, work in the pants and shirt that are owned by the uniform company.

If asked a question that you don't know the answer to, tell the client that you will look into it and get back to them.

If you do an extra service or area for a customer that we will need to bill for, make sure to put it in the notes of the mobile live app. Telling us is not good enough, we will not remember.

If you sign up a neighbor and do them, write the customer and program info, along with date and time down on our copy of our customer, or write it down on a scratch piece of paper and slip it on to your route. Make sure to get their name, home & cell numbers along with their address and a credit card number and check.

## **On the Client's Property**

Our customers are continuous service. That means we come back every year until they cancel. A lot of people cannot grasp this concept despite 3 mailings in the winter and several phone calls Knock on the door for every first application. Introduce yourself and let them know what you will be doing.

Blow the fertilizer off all pavement.

Observe client's property and help client obtain the best lawn within our power.

Make recommendations on mowing and watering.

Scout for problems on the lawn.

Diagnose problem spots on the lawn and leave client the proper turf tip and mark the correct condition code on the office copy.

Don't fill up equipment on the lawn.

Do not turn the equipment around on clients' driveways because it leaves marks.

Do not drive over landscaping, brick pavers sidewalks, or patios.

If you damage anything on a customer's property, call your supervisor **ASAP**. Also leave a note for the customer that we will take care of the problem.

**Always** start in the back yard. This will prevent you from doing the front yard then finding out you have a locked gate or dog in the back and cannot do the back yard. It also helps the office staff on the phone tell clients that did not see us in the back yard and think we missed it, that we start in the back yard and they might not have seen us.

If you start a lawn but cannot finish it (locked gate, broken machine, etc.), leave the customer a note about the problem and that we will return. **NEVER** leave the invoice or they think we are ripping them off by billing the full lawn and only doing partial.

If it has been raining, walk the lawn prior to putting equipment on it. Keep as little fertilizer and weed control in the machine as possible so that it is lighter.

In the fall, don't apply fertilizer to lawns that have more than 75% leaf cover. While the fertilizer will sift and fall down into the grass, the perception clients have is that it gets sucked up and is wasted. If we are at the very end of the season and the lawn has a lot of leaf cover, quickly blow it on to one half of the yard and fertilize the exposed half. Then blow the leaves to the other half and fertilize that half. You can also blow them up against a tree if it has a bark bed or landscaping under it.

Even if you have told a client about a problem or need to water more the last time you were there, tell them that information again. We cannot force the client to properly maintain their lawn, but we need to make sure they receive the message so we cannot be blamed when the lawn does not reach its full potential.

Don't put more fertilizer in the hopper than what is needed.

Try to empty the hopper on the last lawn.

Fix all turn marks or other lawn damage.

Rate the client's property.

If the lawn is too dry for fertilizer to be effective, don't fertilize it. Leave the client a note that their lawn is too dry and we will apply the fertilizer at a different time.

If equipment, weather, or drought conditions prevent you from applying weed control, do not fertilize the lawn.

All Brown spots need to be looked at. Check the appropriate box on the invoice and leave the customer a flyer.

We should not be fertilizing in winds over 20 mph. If your fertilizer pattern or boom spray pattern is moving, either work with the wind, look for clients with lawns that are more protected from wind, or ask us how long it is going to remain windy.

Maintain at least a 15' application buffer from surface water (lake, river, stream), unless using deflector. If using deflector it is 3' buffer. If a continuous natural vegetative buffer separates the turf and surface water, then maintain a 10' buffer.

Fertilizer cannot be applied to frozen soil or saturated water.

## Products

Protect fertilizer on truck and in hopper from rain.

Know the product and how much square footage a bag covers

Don't put in more fertilizer than you need.

Know the weed control and make sure pressure and spray width are correct.

Apply the correct amount fertilizer and weed control to a client's lawn.

Know what MSDS sheets and product labels are and where to find them in truck and on the internet.

Know what is in the spill kit and how to use it.

Triple rinse all empty containers and throw them in the recycling container.

Do not put empty containers on the floor of the pesticide closet.

If you have to pour some product into a container, it needs to be labelled with what is in it.

Let your supervisor or manager know when we are getting low on a certain product.

#### Crabgrass control:

1 bag of 20-0-10 with dimension covers 14M.

Don't put crabgrass control on new seed or bare spots or in areas that are 75% or more shade.

Put regular fertilizer down and leave the customer a note about what you did.

Apply preemergent heavier on lawns who had crabgrass in the past or where we have notes to slow down or dial up with PREM.

Do not "Dial down" with preemergent crabgrass control. This is for lawns that grow too fast and want less nitrogen down. Ignore those notes on round 1, but on rounds 2 – 5 you will put down 25% less fertilizer.

If customers did not get Preemergent crabgrass control, do NOT spray their crabgrass. We charge them for it. It costs a lot more money for the product to spray Drive, takes a lot more time than granular in the spring, and can easily result in 2 – 3 trips. I used to charge the same price as a regular app to spray crabgrass, but if it is early in the season, and it is bad, they should pay 2 – 3 times as much.

#### Fertilizer:

Blow off all driveways and sidewalks.

Do not fertilize lawns that are brown from heat stress.

Do not fertilize lawns under 100 % deep leaf cover. If 75% of the lawn is covered with leaves, and we are not spraying weed control, go ahead and fertilize it.

We should not be fertilizing in winds over 20 mph. If your fertilizer pattern or boom spray pattern is moving, either work with the wind, look for clients with lawns that are more protected from wind, or ask us how long it is going to remain windy.

#### Weed Control:

Do not stop machine with nozzles spraying, it will burn.

Do not fill the machine up with weed control on the lawn.

Don't soak areas with hand wand, hand wand puts out more volume than nozzles.

Maintain a 2 foot buffer strip around all bodies of water. We cannot put fertilizer or weed control into water.

Don't get too close to plants. Leave a 6" buffer. It is easier to explain weeds near flowers to customers, or even go back out to touch up rather than replace dead plants and lose customers.

On invoices, circle the percentage of the lawn you sprayed. If you spot treat, circle 25%.

All new customers get the lawn blanket sprayed for weeds on the first application.  
Our weed control will burn bent grass when temps are above 80.  
Sensitive plants: Grape vines, tomatoes, roses. Our mist from several feet away can kill them.  
Periodically spray the pavement to make sure your coverage is still even.

## **Equipment**

We try to provide the best equipment to make you the most efficient you can be. However, we are constantly evolving and looking for your feedback on how we can help you improve and be more efficient at your job.

Have a basic understanding of your equipment. Be able to describe problems with the machine so that we can be troubleshoot over the phone.

Make sure the equipment is running before you leave the shop.

Know what hills the equipment can handle and don't drive on unsafe terrain.

Idle the Z-sprayer down on hills or when spinning in wet areas. This will give you more traction.

Check for leaking nozzles.

Know basic maintenance like changing a belt.

Know how to use a circuit tester to check for electrical problems.

Know how to calibrate ground speed and insure the equipment is moving at the right speed. Weed control is mixed based on a 4.5 mph ground speed. Do not drive faster than 4.5 mph because the weed control will not be strong enough.

Know how to calibrate weed control.

Make sure the paddle stays clean of fertilizer build up.

Calibrate spreader to apply the right amount.

Watch nozzles for dripping or running on after shutting off the pump.

Keep check valves in the nozzles clean.

Keep main filter clean.

Spray on pavement occasionally to check overlap of nozzles.

Watch nozzles to insure you are not spraying the machine and having it drip on to the lawn.

Keep an eye on the toggle switch. If the switch touches steel, it can short out and blow fuses.

Don't let the wand from the machine drag. It will catch and snap back at you. Make sure it is securely on the machine.

Turn the machine off on your last job for the day.

## **Paperwork**

Read and initial notes pertinent to each job.

Write the client notes that you may have about their property. For example, if the note says "they are seeding under the front tree, no PREM" then write the customer a note that you kept the crabgrass control off the area under the front tree and put down starter fertilizer instead. Also initial the note on our copy so we know you did that.

Pay attention to client's history.

Pay attention to client's scheduled services and programs.

Understand program codes or use a reference sheet.

If the client does not have flag codes of dog, an invisible dog fence, or underground sprinklers, pay attention to the property. Look for the sign of an invisible fence on the mailbox. Look for a dog with shock collar on it.

Look for the vacuum breaker against the house to determine if they have underground sprinklers.

Let us know when the size of the lawn is wrong.

Let us know when geocoding is wrong, and help us mark it in the right location.

Bring all slips come back to the office.

If for any reason you cannot do a client's property, let them know and write it on the paper work so we know why it was not done. Do NOT leave the invoice because the client will think we are ripping them off.

Insure all client notes are legible.

Notify client and office of problems with lawn.

Notify client and office with potential up sells for property like moles, grubs, mosquitoes, wasps, etc.

## **General awareness when working**

Observe neighbors' lawns and leave flyers for services they may need or want.

Approach neighbors that are outside.

Clean up spilled fertilizer in street.

Look for good locations to place intersection or neighbor advertising signs.

## **End of the Day**

Gas up truck and equipment.

Dispose of empty bags of fertilizer.

Dispose of trash inside of the truck.

Clean up any spilled fertilizer.

Separate any wet fertilizer and set it out to dry on cardboard the next morning.

Put tools and extra products back where they belong.

Finger test the side of the truck. If you run your finger on truck and it leaves a mark, it needs to be cleaned.

Write down any repairs that need to be done and fill out a repair tag if leaving equipment with your name so the mechanic knows who to ask questions of.

Put any electric back pack sprayers on the shelf and put a charger on them.

Turn off the lights.

Close the overhead doors.

Lock the side office door deadbolt and front door dead bolt if you are the last one back.

Fill out the end of day paper work as you are performing each task.

## **Washing truck and equipment**

Make sure the truck, trailer/rack, and equipment is washed at the end of the week.

Since the pressure washer at full speed can take off our decals and paint, use a hand sprayer and garden hose.

High pressure can be used on the trailer/rack and inside of the wheel wells of the truck.

Scrub the wheels and flat bed on the truck with a different brush than the side.

Fertilizer has a very salt content and is very corrosive. Make sure all fertilizer is washed off of the cracks and crevices in the bed of the truck.

Wipe down the entire truck after rinsing and squeegee the windows.

Every other week spray Armor All on a rag and wipe down the dash board, steering column, and inside of doors of the truck.

Scrub the rails of the rack or trailer with a different brush than what is used on the truck.

Pressure wash the fertilizer out of the cracks and crevices on the deck of the trailer/rack.

Spray a degreaser on the equipment and let it sit on the machine while you wash the truck and trailer/rack.

The equipment should be running at full speed while cleaning, or else it will stall out.

Scrub all 4 rims on the machine.

Scrub all surface areas that are accessible on the machine.

When the drying cloths are too dirty to use, put them in our dirty laundry bag.

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Signature

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Date