

Selecting a lawn care service

New lawn care services are starting all over North Dakota. Selecting the best company can get confusing. Here are some tips to help you make a good decision:

1. Ask for a lawn inspection. This should include a free estimate for service.

2. Determine the services that you need (and don't need) from the company. Some companies offer only fertilization while others offer more complete lawn care, including pest control and mowing.

Keep in mind that most quality lawns do nicely with 2 to 3 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet each year. If you remove your grass clippings and water your lawn often, you will need more. Insecticide (grub control) and fungicide applications should only be applied when absolutely needed.

3. Ask about the pricing systems and what services are included. Consider annual costs as well as cost per application. Find out what is guaranteed (if anything). With lawn care ser-

vices, as with most things in life, you generally get what you pay for. This doesn't necessarily mean that the most expensive firm is the best, but you must consider that quality materials and trained employees do not come without expense. If a quoted price sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

4. Determine their qualifications. You deserve professional help when problems occur. Membership in a professional organization and/or a college degree in horticulture usually indicate a professional interest and a degree of permanence. Check to see if the employees that apply pesticides are licensed and certified.

5. Learn about their response time. How quickly will a representative inspect a potential lawn problem? How soon can remedial steps be taken?

6. The reputation of the lawn care service is important. How long has the lawn care company been doing business locally? What do other customers say about their service? Is the lawn care firm willing to accept the views of an unbiased party if problems arise?

You may wish to ask the lawn care firm for names and addresses of satisfied customers as references. Have you seen the company working in your neighborhood? If so, how do their equipment and personnel appear?


If you want further information on the company's service record,



contact our state Better Business Bureau at 701-271-2855.

7. Have a complete understanding with the company before work starts. Most conflicts between homeowners and companies are due to miscommunication over services to be provided or unrealistic expectations about the results to be achieved. This is especially true when a homeowner wants a "picture perfect" lawn.

Ultimately, **YOU** are responsible for the maintenance of your lawn, including mowing and watering. Lawn care companies can perform some of the necessary tasks, but you shouldn't expect miracles from them.

The key to having a beautiful lawn will be good communication and a strong partnership between yourself and your lawn care service (nice weather sure helps too). 

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