

the Grassette

TERRE VISTA LLC

So far so good. This season has gotten off to a better than expected start not because of the economy but rather I decided to downsize my crew to three instead of four, it takes us a little longer but I think that it will better off in the long run; Kolby will be home for the summer in a few weeks.

You know nothing makes you feel like your getting older than to sit back and watch your children grow up. This past week end our oldest daughter Alex, went to her high school prom. "How could this be?" I asked my wife, "my prom was just a few years ago," ok I did the math and it was a couple of decades ago, but still it just wasn't right.

I remember when our son, Kolby, went to his; and my thought then was my gosh this thing is expensive \$75.00 for a tux and then another \$30.00 for the corsage and then I gave him \$100.00 bucks for dinner. I said to my wife I could not wait until the girls went to theirs because their date would have to spring for the meal. Dinner was the biggest cost for my son so I naturally surmised that the prom could not possible cost me too much since that would be my daughter's date responsibility; wrong. I forgot about "the dress." I emphasize "the dress" because forevermore at our house all I have to utter is those two little words and everyone knows to what I am

MAY 2009

referring. Anyway dress shopping started about five weeks before the big event and I guess that it is tradition to go to a place called Parrot-Fa-Nalia for "the dress," in fact, my wife went there for her prom This particular dress shop even registers your pick because God forbid if you were to show up in the same dress as one of your fellow classmates, imagine the embarrassment. At the beginning of this process I handed down a budget and I gave strict instructions that this was to be followed at all costs, well like most directives I employ it was quickly shot down when my daughter called with the perfect dress, only it was well over twice the amount of our previously agreed budget, now I felt like congress only it was all my money that was being spent. I consulted with my wife and a few other mothers and I was told that I needed to buck up and just right the check, so I not wanting to rock the boat did as I was told. The dress was beautiful and Alex looked fabulous. I guess this eased the sting a bit but when she brought home the dress for all to see I told her sister, Regan, that I hoped she liked the dress as well because she was going to wear it in a few years. Well that went over like a tax increase. To make a long story short by the time I added up the total costs, "the dress," the new shoes, the hair cut and color, the manicure and pedicure, the new clutch, and oh yes his

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boutonniere. After all the costs were added up lets just say that my son's prom experience was much cheaper, as a matter of fact it was about 75% cheaper. Like I have said many times in the past I wish I would have had all boys, they are so much less maintenance. Of course I am only joking I love my girls and I would not change them for the world, but I do think that there should be and extra deductions on my tax return for the caring of girls. I need a bailout!



Turf's Up

Right now we are perfect in our amount of moisture for the year not "too much" and not "too little" "just right" I guess it can be said it has been a "Goldie Locks" season. Okay, enough of my mastery of childhood nursery rhymes. The lawns are looking pretty good right now except I have noticed that they are not greening up as quickly as we would like and I have also noticed that they are not growing like in seasons past.

One thing I would like to caution you all, typically around the second or third week in May our lawns start the process of reseeding themselves. Fescue lawns send up long course stalks with seed heads attached. No matter how sharp our blades

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are sometimes they just do not make a quality cut and in other cases they bounce off the blades and are left behind uncut. I apologize in advance this phenomenon only lasts a couple of weeks.

Sometime this month we will be applying our second round of pre-emergent plus a well balanced fertilizer. At this time I will also be spraying for broad-leaf weeds, especially dandelions.

It is all about efficiency

I am often asked by peers and customers alike, “how have I managed to stay in business; that is so highly competitive, for over 20 years?” I have seen many companies start up one season and then by the next they are nothing more than an ad in the “Yellow Pages.” Without a doubt I feel that my number one goal is taking care of our customers, that being said I feel the best way to address this is through efficiency. Not only is it important to take care of the customer in a timely fashion but it is equally important to make sure that not one movement is wasted from the time we pull up on the job site. You see I get paid \$35 per mow if it takes us 15 minutes or 30 minutes. In fact, every minute of everyday during the season is accounted, we are so efficient that I can tell on any day plus or minus within 15 minutes were we will be, weather permitting of course. I have even had customers tell me that they know “the sun will rise in the East and my lawn will be mowed on Thursday.”

During the season my every moment is accounted for I have the same routine everyday. I wake up at 5:00 am turn on channel 10 and get my news and eat breakfast. If there is rain in the forecast I immediately make my way downstairs to my office where I pull up the local radar sites and see for myself just where the rain is tracking. After I determine that we will work that day I check the rain gauge to see, if any, the amount of rain that we received the night before. I leave the house at 6:15 am and I am off to the shop. As soon as I arrive I check the oil in the machines and we start loading the trailer. I load the trailer the same way everyday as well; as this tends to make sure that nothing is forgotten. We leave the shop at 7:00 am and depending on the day we arrive back anywhere between three and four o'clock. On Mondays I fill up the diesel truck at 31st and Pawnee and then again on Thursdays at Central & Rock Road both of these stops are on our route, so again no wasted time. I have even changed Wednesday's schedule around so that I can dump with little or no deviation from our

schedule, I dump again Friday afternoon so that Monday we can begin again with an empty truck.

Each day when we return to the shop we blow the equipment off with compressed air, making sure to clean the air filters, clean air and regular oil changes are the key into maintaining the equipment; after all without the equipment we would not be in business. I can great pride in our equipment it is old but it is outstanding shape and I hope to get many more seasons out of it. My father always taught me to buy the best equipment because in the long run it would be cheaper and so far I am a big believer in this theory. Not only does it hold true with buying the best equipment but maintaining it as well. We only use synthetic oil in our equipment which at almost \$7.00 a quart may seem a bit pricy but I can assure you that it is well worth it. Our machines only hold about a quart and a half and we have to change the oil every 100 hours (once per month). Kohler, our engine manufacturer, says in the owner's manual that if you change the oil every 100 hours the engine should last 1200 to 1500 hours. With the synthetic oil that we use we double that and get about 3200 hours out of our machines.

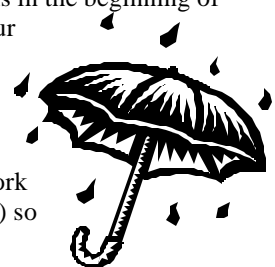


Basically, taking care of our customers through efficiency and treating every lawn like it's our own is what I attribute to our long term success and it is also worth mentioning that I truly love what I do, except for that 8 week stretch during late June through middle of August.

“Rainy Day Schedule”

Even though we have not seen much rain yet this season we are approaching the wettest time of the year for Wichita. Rain is always welcome but the havoc it plays with my schedule is not. Many of you are new customers so I will review our policy when it comes to rain. As a rule if it rains on your day we will try and service your lawn the next day, however, if it rains more that one day all bets are off and we will get to your yard as soon as possible. Please also keep in mind that that if it rains in the beginning of the week that too will affect our service at the end of the week.

In fact two years ago over the Easter Holiday it rained on Good Friday and then all day on Saturday, we do not work on Sunday (unless emergency) so we had to pick up our Friday



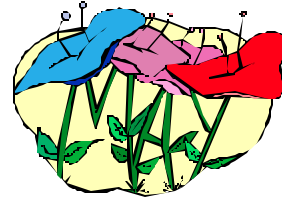
accounts on Monday and then again on the following Friday in order to maintain our schedule. I am a stickler for keeping things on time; my wife thinks that I am a bit autistic and I use my obsessive ness about my schedule to keep me grounded. It's my form of self-therapy.

Please also give me a call if you have a special need to change your normal day for service. Many times during the summer we will have customers that are going to have a party, wedding, garage sale etc. and they will need to change their normal day of service. Please give us at least a week notice so that I can accommodate your needs. Also if it does rain near your event I can make sure that we put your yard to the front of the list, early communication is the key.

Fruit Trees Not Flowering?

A number of killing frosts and freezes on fruit trees this spring have been severe enough to kill flowers in bloom and, in some cases, fruit buds that were approaching bloom. We may have a second problem this year. Some fruit trees (especially apples) will not fruit or will have a light fruit crop this year not because of frosts and freezes but due to the heavy fruit crop borne in 2008. To understand why, it is important to know how fruit trees bear fruit. We are all familiar with fruit trees flowering in the spring and maturing fruit during the summer. What is less well known is that the fruit buds for one year are produced during the summer of the previous year. For example, an apple tree that is maturing fruit this summer will also be making fruit buds for 2010. The problem is that these two processes compete with one another for energy. A heavy fruit crop one year can leave little energy for fruit buds for the next. This leads to a problem known as biennial bearing, a pattern of heavy fruit bearing one year and very little the next. In our situation, the source of the problem was the Easter freeze of 2007, which virtually eliminated that year's crop. With no fruit, energy went into making fruit buds during the summer of 2007. Spring frosts often thin (or eliminate) fruit in Kansas (especially peaches and apricots), but that did not happen in 2008, so trees produced exceptionally large crops. As a result, much energy went into maturing fruit with little left for producing fruit buds for 2009. So what should we do? Actually, if there is no fruit crop this year there is nothing we can do this growing season to help the situation. We must concentrate on 2010. Doing a good job of pruning next year will help eliminate some of the fruit but

will probably not be enough. We must also thin, which involves picking off excess fruit. For apples that means leaving a fruit about every 4 inches. It is OK to leave fruit closer as long as the average on the branch is about one every 4 inches.



May To Do's

1. Plant Herbs
2. Prune spring flowers & shrubs after blooming.
3. Mulch plants to conserve water.
4. Plant annuals
5. Remove leaves or dig & divide spring bulbs after leaves yellow.
6. Pinch back new growth on chrysanthemums until July 4th.
7. Visit Kansas Grown Farmers Market on Saturdays at the extension service (21st & Ridge) 7 a.m. –noon.
8. Mother's Day, May 10th

AS SMART AS YOU ARE.... I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS!

Coca-Cola was originally green.

The state with the highest percentage of people who walk to work: Alaska!

The cost of raising a medium-size dog to the age of eleven: \$6,400

Intelligent people have more zinc and copper in their hair. (I must have a lot of zinc and copper, just not too much hair)

The first novel ever written on a typewriter: Tom Sawyer.

If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle. If the horse has one front leg in the air the person died as a result of wounds received in battle. If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.

Q. There are more collect calls on this day than any other day of the year?

A. Father's Day (the key word is collect)

In Scotland, a new game was invented. It was entitled Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden...and thus the word GOLF entered into the English language.

Q. What do bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers all have in common?

A. All invented by women

Remove Blossoms on Newly Planted Strawberries

Spring-bearing strawberry plants that were set out this spring should have blossoms pinched off. New plants have a limited amount of energy. If blossoms remain on the plants, the energy that should go to runner development is used to mature fruit instead. For a good strawberry plant population and a good strawberry crop next year, early runner development is necessary. Early developing runners will produce the most strawberries next spring. Newly planted ever bearing plants also should have the fruits removed for the first 4 to 6 weeks after planting so they develop a strong root system.



I know that it is sometimes hard to practice this but believe me in the long run your patience will be rewarded. Just last season I planted ever bearing plants and I followed this advice and this season I am definitely going to reap the benefits of the loss of last seasons' crop of berries. I planted five plants and this season they have tripled in size and each plant is loaded with fruit. Remember patients is the key for

gardening but just like in life patients is always rewarded with good fruit.



Here is my version of spinach artichoke dip. It is a crowd pleaser. I serve it with toast points or as a vegetable dip. You will need:

1 ½ cup mayonnaise
1 ½ cup sour cream
1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
3 cloves garlic
1 cup parmesan cheese
1 cup chopped spinach (all water squeezed out)
1 6 oz. jar artichoke hearts (drained)
2-3 dashes of your favorite hot sauce or omit altogether

In a food processor blend all the ingredients, reserve half of the parmesan cheese to top. Place in a greased casserole and bake in a 350 degree oven for 30-45 minutes.

“He that lives upon hope will die fasting.”

Benjamin Franklin



Happy Memorial Day and thank you to all our veterans. I will never forget your service to our country, it is because of you that we enjoy our freedoms.

**Happy
Mother's Day
May 10th**

Terre Vista



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