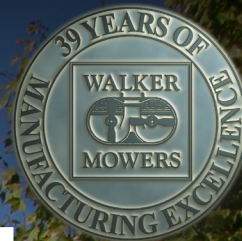


WALKER TALK



SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS

Pellitteri Property Services emphasizes the company wouldn't be in business today without its two Walker Mowers.

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Barb's Mower**

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Walker Workers

Walker Mowers are being produced year-round every working day at our manufacturing plant in Fort Collins, Colorado, by a company of around 200 workers. There are 160 workers on the factory floor making the machines and 40 workers in the office supporting them. While some may call it semantics, we like to refer to ourselves as workers because we are all hands-on workers, producers, makers—no room here for paper shufflers, desk jockeys or office fluff.

It has always been our idea (going back to my dad's days of leadership) that each of us in the company is primarily working for ourselves and our families. For that reason, we say each employee is working *with* the company instead of *for* the company. By joining forces *with* a group of like-minded folks to work together in the company, we are accomplishing a better livelihood for ourselves than if we were working by ourselves. We believe this understanding of working together gives a number of benefits that play out in several different ways as noted below.

In order to provide full-time, year-round jobs, we have chosen to operate with level manufacturing, producing machines at a steady rate all year long, even though the product demand is seasonal. There are no seasonal or temporary jobs in the company. For that reason, many of our workers come to the company and stay a long time. The average tenure with the company is 10 years and that pays off for the company by having workers invested in their jobs, knowing that doing their best work today helps them have a continuing opportunity in the future.

There is a strong work ethic in the company, with a standard nine-hour workday. We pay a bonus each week for perfect attendance during that week. In 2018, eight employees had perfect attendance for one or two or three years consecutively, and one of our welders celebrated 13 consecutive years. In contrast to complaints about the work ethic of millennials, now 46 percent of our factory team is made up of millennials, and they are showing up and doing a great job of matching or even leading our more senior workers.

With unemployment in northern Colorado at historic lows of around two percent the last couple of years, and with high labor demand from energy production and building construction industries, we have been able to fill all open positions and have been making some great hires for the company. We have not used recruiters or agencies to fill openings; a high percentage of our job applicants are by referral from family and friends of employees.

The next time you see a Walker Mower, please think of a group of hands-on workers in Colorado who love making things while providing for their families, and while work is still work, there is enjoyment and pride in knowing our customers are receiving our best effort. Our workers want each customer to receive top quality and value for their investment.

Our statement of beliefs (see www.walker.com/what-we-believe) includes this statement: "Dignity and honor exist in all work performed by diligent workers." Amen. **WT**

Bob Walker

Bob Walker, President

"Dignity and honor exist in all work performed by diligent workers."





Guy Pellitteri of Pellitteri Property Services emphasizes the company wouldn't be in business today without its two Walker Mowers.

KEEP THE WHEELS TURNING

It's a beautiful, cool day in Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario, Canada, perfect for mowing lawns. But Guy Pellitteri and his wife, Diane, are taking the day off. They're going to share their company story about working in a town that has won recognition as the prettiest in Canada.

Pellitteri Property Services is not the biggest mowing contractor in the area. In fact, it's a mom-and-pop operation, yet one that maintains some of the nicest properties along this stretch of Lake Ontario. Upward of 15 to 20 percent of their work comes from these summer/seasonal homes and another 60 percent

from year-round residents. Commercial properties make up the rest, enough to keep the husband and wife team busy mowing five days a week, with one day left open for gardening or to adjust the schedule when it rains.

Ironically, when they started in business in 1999, mowing lawns wasn't their

“Like Diane and I have learned, if the Walker Mower wheels aren’t turning, we’re not making money.”

– Guy Pellitteri, Pellitteri Property Services

first choice. Guy wanted to manage properties. However, after a few customers asked them to maintain their lawns, the business model changed. They still provide property management services—closing and opening pools, turning irrigation on and off, and coordinating with electricians, plumbers and other contractors—for several large estates. During the winter months, they also continue to keep tabs on these properties, but mowing has long been the company staple.

SPINNING WHEELS

The Pellitteris admit that profitable growth didn’t come easy. “The first couple of years, we were working hard, taking any job that came our way, but we seemed to be going in circles,” says Guy. “Then I attended a seminar on pricing at Landscape Ontario and came home with some ideas that helped tremendously. Most people, when they start in business, don’t have any idea how to price their service and we were the same way. If the mowing contractor down the street was charging \$50 a lawn, that’s what we charged without knowing our actual costs.

“The speaker impressed upon attendees to get a handle on all of their overhead and then use that as a point to start setting a price. That winter, Diane and I went through all of our costs and implemented a healthy price increase the following spring. We were afraid customers would resist, but they didn’t when we explained the reason for it.”

“Second only to pricing mistakes, many new contractors fail to purchase the right equipment,” Guy emphasizes. “I encourage anyone getting into this business to get a Walker Mower. Maybe they cannot afford a new one right off the top, so I tell them to get a used one



Guy and Diane Pellitteri, owners of Pellitteri Property Services, admit that profitable growth didn’t come easy. Learning how to price jobs was a major obstacle to overcome initially.



like we did. There are other good machines on the market, but nothing with the complete package that Walker Mowers offer. The machine’s versatility, agility and quickness lend to its efficiency, and the out-front deck means there’s less trimmer-in-hand time. We get in and out of properties faster, leaving behind a manicured look and giving us more time to work on other properties. Like Diane and I have learned, if the Walker Mower wheels aren’t turning, we’re not making money.”

BEING PARTICULAR

Pellitteri Property Services operates two Walker Mowers, both T25i’s with 48-inch GHS decks. Purchased from E & R Lawn Equipment in nearby Niagara

Falls, each is equipped with the deck-height adjuster and an upgraded suspension seat. The mowers are kept for three years and then sold privately, usually to other contractors.

“Guy is particular about his mowers,” relates Diane. “He detailed that first used one we purchased right down to replacing the Walker decals. He also does all the routine maintenance and most repairs, and from time to time, helps other landscapers with repairs and troubleshooting on their Walker Mowers.

“In the off-season, he disassembles the mowers, replaces any needed parts, and meticulously cleans and details them. When the season begins, customers often compliment us on our ‘new’ machines.”

Guy isn’t the sole “particular” family



Summer/seasonal lake properties account for 15 to 20 percent of Pellitteri Property Services' work.



Guy Pellitteri isn't the sole "particular" family member at Pellitteri Property Services. Diane is an excellent operator and prides herself in being even more careful than her husband when operating her Walker Mower.

adjust the decks according to weather conditions. The decks remain high during a drought period to keep the grass healthy and are lowered for a shorter cut during rainy periods. Because of the ban on pesticides and herbicides, we try to mow the grass at a higher level, about 3 inches or more, to shade out weed seeds from germinating."

Adds Diane, "Some clients have become wise to our height adjusters and request a specific cutting height to match their personal preference. It can become a bit challenging remembering who wants what height."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

With its experience and reputation, Pellitteri Property Services has plenty of opportunity to grow. Instead, the owners pass on new prospects to other contractors. "We decided early on that we would keep this a family affair," says Diane. "When they were in school, our children, Michael and Rachael, pitched in, too. Michael operated a mower and became so efficient he placed within the top five at the Walker Obstacle Course Competition in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2006. Rachael helped with the office/computer work."

She continues, "Being an owner/operator keeps our operation efficient and allows us to maintain high standards. We look after each property like it's our

own. This also gives us the opportunity to establish great relationships not only with clients, but with their neighbors as well, many of whom see us mowing on the same day every week."

These business owners have found a comfortable niche and credit Walker Mowers for much of their success—to the extent that Guy emphasizes they wouldn't be in business today without them. It's all the more reason to keep those wheels turning. **WT**

The Pellitteris have good relationships with local mowing contractors, and from time to time, Guy helps them with repairs and troubleshooting.



member. An excellent operator, Diane prides herself in being more careful than her husband. "I cringe when Guy bumps into something while loading his on the trailer. That would never happen to mine," she laughs. In addition to mowing, Diane has traditionally done most of the gardening, although the couple shares much of that duty today.

Again, mowing is the company staple. The average start date is the third week in April and the mowing goes through the end of October. The two Walker Mowers are then put through their paces for another month (or until the first snow, whichever comes first) for leaf cleanups.

"The deck-height adjuster comes in real handy for leaves," adds Guy. "On one machine, we set the deck at the highest level to quickly vacuum up the bulk of the leaves. Our second Walker follows up at a lower deck level for a manicured cut.

"Throughout the mowing season, we



Barb King has been mowing with her Walker Mower for 16 years. "Placing the right hand on the speed control and the left on the small steering levers seemed so natural ... and I've mowed that way ever since," she recalls.

NOBODY TOUCHES BARB'S MOWER

One never knows where a Walker Mower may show up. In fact, a most unlikely place is the small town of Hannon, Missouri, located two hours south of Kansas City. Here, homeowner Barb King has been mowing with her Walker Mower for 16 years. Once a week on Friday, before her hair appointment, she spends nearly two hours mowing her lawn.

"It's a joy," says King of using her mower. "Nothing compares. I mowed my neighbor's lawn once with her machine that had those big levers. It nearly beat me to death, and by the time I finished, my hands were numb from steering it."

You would think this homeowner is a seasoned pro by the way she maneuvers the mower around the many trees and plantings in her yard. "When the dealer first delivered the mower, he adjusted the seat for my short legs and then showed me how to operate it," she explains. "Placing the right hand on the speed control and left on the small steering levers seemed so natural at the time, and I've mowed that way ever since. It's so easy."

COUNTRY AIR

At 78, King is the eldest of seven siblings. She was raised on a farm a stone's throw from where she lives today, and still enjoys the outdoors and what nature has to offer. When she and her late husband purchased their property and built their home in 2000, she envisioned a yard resplendent with a variety of trees to accompany a lone elm.

Today, that old elm holds seniority over a couple of willows, including a globe willow that stands tall in the front yard. There's also a collection of cypress, apple and cedar, along with chestnut and black walnut, a Colorado aspen, a mulberry and a redbud, to name a few.

She needed something other than her steering-wheel garden tractor to mow around the new plantings. On the top of her wish list was a compact zero-turn machine and she found one at a dealership just across the

state line in Pittsburg, Kansas.

"I looked at one or two other zero-turn mowers before I saw the Walker Mower, and they were just too large and bulky for what I had in mind," she recalls. "The dealer set me up with a small Walker Mower with a 13-HP Kawasaki engine and 42-inch side-discharge deck.

The cost was around \$5,300, which doesn't seem like much today, but back then, it was a lot of money. I was committed to making an investment in a machine that would do what I wanted it to do and last a long time."

Sixteen years later with 814 hours on the mower, she's not disappointed. "You can't ask for a better machine and I love it," says King. "I baby it, too. I always keep it inside. I have a cover for the seat to keep it looking new and I never let any-

one else use my mower, and that includes my husband, Richard, whom I've been married to for eight years."

"I was committed to making an investment in a machine that would do what I wanted it to do and last a long time."

— Barb King, Homeowner



Barb King poses with her husband, Richard. She says she doesn't let anyone else use her mower and that includes Richard. He admits to driving it in and out of the garage a few times, though.

Richard nods his head in agreement, although he admits to being allowed to drive it in and out of the garage a few times.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

King has five children—four boys and one girl—and they all have college degrees. Mom even went back to school at age 50 and earned an associate degree. “They have degrees, but not one of them has a Walker Mower,” she laments, referring to her children.

“I helped one son run his lawn maintenance [business] for four years and couldn't convince him to purchase a Walker Mower. At the same time, I wouldn't let him use mine either. No way,” according to King.

King looks to a local mechanic for any doctoring her mower needs, and that's been few and far between. Last year was the first time any real repair issue showed up—not bad for having the mower for 15 years. She considered purchasing a new one, but soon discovered that someone, somewhere was getting the word out about the mower's value. A used machine, also nearly 15 years old,

was selling for more than she originally paid for hers.

On the advice of the dealer, who emphasized it still had many years of service life in it, she decided to keep her old one. This operator plans to continue to put her Walker Mower through its paces.

Says King, “I keep the grass mowed fairly tall to discourage weeds and carry my landscaping tools in the back for spot trimming. I can even pull around a cart for larger jobs.” She admits to getting the mower stuck a few times mowing too close to a pond in the backyard. No problem, though. Each time, she pulled it out with a truck.

King mentions that when the property was originally purchased and house built, she had three requirements. She wanted an attached garage, a half basement with a safe room for protection from tornadoes, and a fireplace. Little did she know at the time that a Walker Mower would have made a nice addition to the list. **WT**

The globe willow in the background is one of several trees Barb King planted since purchasing the property in 2000.



Barb King transports her landscaping tools in the back of her Walker Mower to make spot trimming more efficient. For larger jobs, she pulls a cart.



Jonathan Nichols puts Nick's Lawn Care's new spreader attachment to work.

FIRST AND LAST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Imagine simultaneously launching a lawn maintenance business and buying a new home while having only two customers, both non-paying. That's what Jeff Nichols did in 2003 after quitting his job as a route salesperson for Frito-Lay.

"It was time for me to do something else," says Nichols. "I had been working seven days a week for 10 years. I liked to mow, and even had a Walker Mower for my own property and my father's (the two non-payers). It was just a matter of

getting more work."

He did. Today, Nick's Lawn Care in Brodnax, Virginia, has 85 customers, 75 percent of whom are commercial clients. In addition to providing full-service lawn maintenance, his company also installs landscaping, which accounts for approximately 40 percent of its annual revenue.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The company's first large account was a cemetery in the neighboring town of South Hill, population 6,500. "The town took a chance on me. We did a good job and I believe the people who visited their loved ones in the

Jeff Nichols poses with his wife, Angela, who he says is the "backbone of the company."

Nick's Lawn Care team (from left to right) includes: Jeff Hintoen, Holden Tanner, Angela Nichols, Jeff Nichols and Jonathan Nichols.



“First impressions count. Word of mouth can make you or break you, especially in smaller communities.”

– Jeff Nichols, Nick's Lawn Care

cemetery noticed the difference in how we maintained it. With a population of 500, Brodnax is a suburb of South Hill. In both places, first impressions count. Word of mouth can make you or break you, especially in smaller communities,” says Nichols.

Still, it was a tenuous beginning. “I was very nervous at first, but Jeff said to have faith and pray. I prayed a lot,” adds his wife, Angela.

Nick's Lawn Care gradually added more accounts, primarily from homeowners who early on accounted for nearly 75 percent of revenue. Commercial accounts—including banks, restaurants, motels, car dealerships, large industrial sites and professional office buildings—now make up the lion's share of mowing.

“I prefer commercial clients because they generally are less hands-on than

homeowners and most are on yearly contracts, which means we have cash flow year around,” notes Nichols. “But we also maintain several properties on nearby Lake Gaston, along with some homeowners in and around town. My dad impressed upon me early on to not forget the smaller customers who helped us get started and we never will. The challenge, of course, is to increase the price for them as our costs go up.”

“Jeff sometimes just doesn't charge enough,” says Angela, who has two full-time jobs, one working at a doc-

tor's office, and another as secretary and bookkeeper for Nick's Lawn Care. “He's a bit of a softy and the last thing he wants to do is overcharge, or in his words, ‘gouge a customer.’”

Nichols nods his head in agreement, adding that, in his defense, he at least learned how to make money from Frito-Lay managers and is still learning from his wife. “There's no question, Angela is the backbone of our company, and

Jeff Nichols says his Walker Mower decal is his best advertising vehicle.





The new 100- by 80-foot shop will provide plenty of room for expansion now that Nick's Lawn Care outgrew its last shop.

without her, we wouldn't be where we are today."

LOOKING TO GROW

Nick's Lawn Care sits on 10 acres of land with a recently constructed 100- by 80-foot shop with plenty of space to store its five Walker Mowers, four trailers and a couple of pieces of larger equipment, along with a new office promised for Angela.

"Our son, Jonathan, is very involved in the business and we want to grow to help ensure his future," Nichols emphasizes. "We outgrew our old shop and this one will give us room to expand our operation. There's plenty of opportunity to grow. The challenge is finding people who are willing to work, and that, too, will be Jonathan's challenge in the future."

As he points out, the company's Walker Mowers ease some of the burden of a worker shortage. "The out-front deck reduces trimming time and they are fast, but not in the strictest sense of the word. Mower speed isn't everything. We don't need to mow fast, but we

want to finish quickly and leave behind a quality cut. As far as I'm concerned, the Walker Mower is the Cadillac of the industry, and if the company ever goes out of business, so will we. I'll never use a different mower."

The mowers lend efficiency in other ways as well. Nick's Lawn Care just purchased a spreader attachment for its 20-HP Walker Mower for laying down fertilizer, lime and lawn seed. "That one attachment will take the place of two push spreaders," Nichols emphasizes. The company also has three dethatcher and two boom sprayer attachments for its mowers, the latter used for applying pre- and post-emergent.

Four other models—one 26-HP Model T, two 25-HP Model Ts and a 29-HP Model H—round out his Walker Mower lineup. The Model H is equipped with a 60-inch side-discharge deck and is employed primarily for large area mowing. The other three have 52-inch GHS decks, which can be interchanged with any of two 62-inch side-discharge decks.

"One thing I forgot to mention about our mowers, but something that is very important, is many of the parts are interchangeable from mower to mower," adds Nichols. "They also have greaseable bearings, which help extend critical wear parts."

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Nichols' personality is an interesting mix of old-school values. He's not all about money, he cares deeply for his original customers, and he hasn't totally embraced social media and Facebook as advertising tools, although he sees their value. One of his most effective advertising vehicles is his enclosed trailers and the large Walker decals he proudly displays on their sides.


"I haven't done much advertising over the years because you don't really need to here. Whereas first impressions count, you're only as good as your last job. That's where the Walker Mower comes in. Nothing beats its cut," he says.

There's another ingredient to building a lasting impression: It's called developing relationships. This owner loves people. He enjoys talking and sharing thoughts, and there's always time for his customers. "I know that time is money, but you also have to spend time with your customers," according to Nichols. Jonathan kids me, saying that I like to talk to customers because it gets me out of work. Maybe it does, but that's not why I do it."

As he points out, first impressions may get you the job, but it's your last job that helps you retain it. **WT**

"As far as I'm concerned, the Walker Mower is the Cadillac of the industry, and if the company ever goes out of business, so will we. I'll never use a different mower."

**— Jeff Nichols,
Nick's Lawn Care**



Scott Faulknor, owner of Red Rock Maintenance, employs a two-step approach to removing leaves: mulch them first, then collect.

HEY, WALKER MOWERS MULCH, TOO

Just as there is a Walker Mower for virtually every application, there's a deck for every application as well. These compact, out-front mowers have long been known for their maneuverability, quality of cut and grass-handling capability with their GHS decks. But did you know they can be very effective as mulching mowers, too? In fact, Walker Manufacturing offers several dedicated mulching decks, along with mulching kits for its 52- and 60-inch side-discharge decks.

The 48-inch mulching deck has long been a favorite for Walker Mower users. The deck's housing design, recirculating baffles, and blade hubs with integrated circulator blades and Gator®-style cutting blades make it a very effective production deck. The deck easily breaks

down grass clippings and leaves while delivering a cut that rivals its GHS counterparts.


There are specific applications in which a mulching deck is a favorable option over a GHS or side-discharge deck. Knowing that recycled grass clippings contribute nitrogen and add organic matter to the soil, some property owners simply prefer their grass clippings left on their yard. By re-cutting clippings before discharging them, mulching decks allow them to decompose rapidly. The clippings are hardly visible, and in many cases, property owners may not see the

difference between collecting clippings and mulching them.

Mulching decks are also particularly useful on larger properties where collecting grass is far too time-consuming, or in areas where disposing yard debris is costly or otherwise a challenge ... not to forget leaf-removal season.

A TIME-SAVER

Colvin's Lawn Care in Jeannette, Pennsylvania, has been in business since 1987. The company has three employees, three Walker Mowers—including two Model Bs—and 80 mowing accounts.



According to Scott Faulknor, owner of Red Rock Maintenance, "What used to add up to two trailer loads of leaves was reduced to a half trailer load" when he began to use a mulching deck.

"We started mulching six years ago with two 48-inch mulching decks," says company owner Chris Colvin. "A mulching deck certainly saves time handling grass clippings, and if I don't explain to customers what I'm doing, they may never notice the difference in cut."

As handy as they are for mowing, he notes that mulching decks are even more valuable in the fall, reducing the volume of leaves his crew members handle. Two other Walker Mower users, Mike Breegle, owner of Breegle's Affordable Lawn Care in Irwin, Pennsylvania, and Scott Faulknor, owner of Red Rock Maintenance in Coboconk, Ontario, Canada, agree.

In business for seven years, Breegle's company has 150 residential and commercial customers, and three Walker Mowers.

"I use the 48-inch mulching deck primarily on my B23i, but I have substituted it for my GHS deck on one of my other Walker Mowers," says Breegle. "I use it from mid-season right through leaf cleanup."

"In the fall, I first blow leaves away from the property's fences and other hard-to-reach areas with a STIHL backpack blower, mulch them with the mower, and then collect them with the GHS deck. The process reduces leaf content from five full bins on my GHS mower to a half bin."

"Then I mow the lawn with the mulching deck. If there are a ton of leaves, I mow over certain areas a couple of times, and may or may not collect



Red Rock Maintenance has two Walker Mowers with two GHS decks and two 48-inch mulching decks.

"What used to add up to two trailer loads of leaves was reduced to a half trailer load."

— Scott Faulknor, Red Rock Maintenance

them, depending on the results."

Red Rock Maintenance has two Walker Mowers with two GHS decks and two 48-inch mulching decks. "During the summer, I mulch every property," says Faulknor. "In the fall, I replace one of the mulching decks with a GHS deck. I first mow the property with the 20-HP Walker Mower equipped with the mulching deck. Then I follow up with the 25-HP mower with the GHS deck equipped with a power dump."

He continues, "The first year I did it this way, I was blown away. What used to add up to two trailer loads of leaves was reduced to a half trailer load. The time savings, just in handling the leaves alone, is incredible and they virtually disappear."

Mike Breegle, owner of Breegle's Affordable Lawn Care, primarily uses a mulching deck on his Model B23i, but occasionally switches it with his GHS decks, too.

ANOTHER TOOL FOR YOUR LAWN-CARE ARSENAL

In addition to the above-mentioned 48-inch mulching deck, Walker Manufacturing offers a 36-inch mulching deck and three versions of a 42-inch mulching deck.

A 36-inch deck gives operators easy access to backyards and heavily landscaped areas. Like its GHS counterpart, it keeps grass clippings and lawn debris away from garden beds and swimming pools, while leaving a manicured look. The three 42-inch decks have different housing designs and blade configurations that give operators the ability to match the deck to specific mowing conditions.

If asked, the above operators would likely tell you their mulching decks are akin to having another tool in their lawn-care arsenal. Like all Walker Mower decks, they are easily interchangeable with both GHS and side-discharge decks, and deliver a cut that is unsurpassed in the industry. **WT**



MOWING A LANDMARK

If you plan to visit Charleston, South Carolina, make room in your schedule to spend a day at Middleton Place. This National Historic Landmark features beautiful display gardens, a house museum, stable yards and craft shops, all recreating early 18th century plantation life in the South.

The gardens alone, said to be America's oldest landscaped gardens, are worth the visit. Comprised of "individual rooms," flowering hillsides, and vista-inspired terraces and lakes, the gardens take up more than half of this 110-acre setting.

No one is more familiar with the gardens and what it takes to maintain them

than Sidney Frazier. The director of horticulture has been with Middleton Place since 1974.

GREEN SPACE

"The 65 acres of gardens, lakes, ponds and paths also include 28 acres of turf," says Frazier, who first worked summers at Middleton Place while attending high school. "We strive to mow all of the turf in two days, starting Monday at 8 a.m. and finishing up on Tuesday by 4 p.m. The majority is done with our two Walker Mowers, a Model D21d with a 48-inch GHS deck and a Model H with a 60-inch side-discharge deck."



Director of horticulture, Sidney Frazier, has been with Middleton Place since 1974.

The grounds are mowed nearly year-round, and that includes mowing the cool-season ryegrass put down in November. Two mower operators tackle a variety of landscaped elements—from mowing large open areas to manicuring the inner garden rooms, including the Octagonal Sunken Garden that once served as a bowling green.

In addition to mowing and maintaining the turf, six full-time gardeners prune

America's oldest
landscape gardens feature
"individual rooms,"
flowering hillsides, and
vista-inspired terraces
and lakes.



Photo credit: Middleton Place Foundation.



Shops that replicate
what plantation
life was like give
visitors a glimpse
into the past.



shrubs and trees, install seasonal color three times a year, weed and otherwise keep the gardens looking neat, and even rake two miles of pathways by hand, something that keeps them in step with the period.

"Our staff performs virtually all of the landscaping and tree care in-house except for larger tree-trimming jobs, [which] we contract out to Bartlett Tree Experts," notes Frazier. "The trees are among the many highlights here. We have several hundred live oaks, including the majestic Middleton Oak that stands 85 feet tall with a circumference of more than 37 feet."

Not to be overshadowed by these

giants, the gardens are an interesting mix of native and nonnative plants. For visitors who are just moving to the area, they provide a natural outdoor classroom for some gardening inspiration. The gardens are beautiful year-round, but there are certain times, e.g., when approximately 10,000 camellias and 100,000 azaleas are in bloom, that Middleton Place becomes especially busy.

Frazier became the director of horticulture in 1981. Since then, he has assumed other responsibilities. Among them is managing the greenhouses, along with the building maintenance and janitorial departments. He was also instrumental in starting an organic farm to

grow farm-to-table vegetables for the on-site restaurant. Altogether, it takes approximately 110 employees to maintain the landmark's many moving parts.

THE RIGHT MOWER

Frazier says he began looking for a different mower eight years ago. "We wanted a machine that delivered a professional look, and could negotiate the terraces and slopes so prevalent around here. Most mowers can handle flat surfaces, but hills and uneven terrain often prove more difficult.

"Our first Walker Mower was the Model H, which impressed me on how much power it demonstrated going both



Gardeners rake two miles of pathways by hand, something that keeps them in step with the period.

forward and in reverse. Because of a low profile and other design features, it didn't slide on the terraced areas and slopes like other mowers, and it delivered a nice cut."

He continues, "We later purchased the smaller mower with a GHS deck, primarily to mow the garden rooms. The gardens are venues for several weddings a year, and the GHS deck keeps these areas manicured and looking very nice."

When asked if mowing can become too distracting for visitors, many of whom become immersed in the setting, Frazier says no, not really. "We mow the most heavily trafficked area early in the morning. The mowers are also relatively unobtrusive, thanks to their small size, and they are much quieter than others we've had. One other thing I forgot to mention is they're very durable, too, and easy to maintain."

A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

If there's a hurricane alley, South Carolina is in it. Hugo raised havoc in 1989, destroying 300 trees at Middleton Place, and Florence gave it a glancing blow.

"We were fortunate, and only had to shut down a day or two because of Florence," recalls Frazier. "Certainly, hurricanes are part of life down here and we pay close attention to any that get near us. When we talk challenges, though, they are not top of my list. Instead, pests like cutworms and diseases like petal blight come to mind, in large part because we fight them as much as possible with organic controls.

"The other challenge we face is something the entire industry faces, finding people who want to work outdoors. It seems young people today would rather work indoors with computers, and those willing to work outside want a degree of flexibility that's difficult to accommodate. As we move forward, though, it's apparent the landscaping profession, among others, will have to learn to work within its parameters."

PLANTATION LIFE

In the Antebellum South, Middleton Place was the residence of four successive generations of Middletons whose plantation holdings spread throughout South Carolina. Middleton Place alone featured 6,500 acres of rice-producing land, an agrarian economy that was sustained by both enslaved and free African Americans.

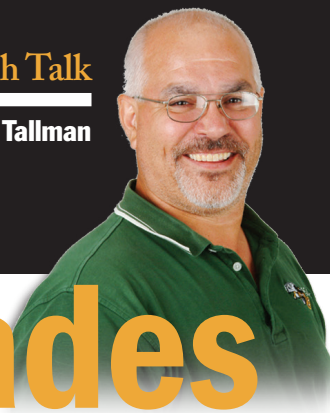
The house museum features an actual collection of family furniture, paintings and documents, among other personal items. The stable yards and animals, the plantation chapel and slave cemetery, a demonstration rice field, along with various shops that replicate spinning textiles, making candles, tanning deer hides, blacksmithing, building and repairing furniture, and more give visitors a glimpse into the past.

Laid out in 1741, the formal gardens' design was inspired by the work of Andre' Le Nôtre, the noted landscape architect who designed many great European gardens, including those at the Palace of Versailles. The gardens would evolve over time to accommodate new plant material and expand beyond their original footprint to incorporate romantic garden influences.

Middleton Place was declared a National Historic Landmark because it is the birthplace and home of Arthur Middleton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Middleton Place is open every day of the week except Christmas Day. **WT**



The 65 acres of gardens, lakes and paths also include 28 acres of turf.



MAINTAINING Walker Deck Blades

I recently had the opportunity to train dealers and large commercial customers on basic maintenance of the Walker Mower. The topic of blade maintenance came up, and there were some very interesting thoughts and ideas presented by technicians on this topic. With this in mind, I would like to put forth a few thoughts on blade maintenance (with the note that most of this information can be found in your operator's manual).

Blade sharpening is important to overall deck and mower maintenance as it affects performance, along with wear and tear on the mower components. Therefore, it is recommended that you inspect your blades every 10 hours of use for dullness, bends, cracks or nicks in the cutting edges. This is especially important when mowing in sandy soils or abrasive grasses.

Always observe basic safety requirements when removing and sharpening the blades on your deck. Use eye protection and gloves, and remove the ignition key from the tractor. Do not attempt to sharpen or reuse a blade that is less than 3/4 inches (19 mm) wide on the flat of the blade. Also,

replace the blade if the thickness of the flat section is 1/16 inch (1.6 mm) or less.

If the blades require sharpening, there are several options available. There are commercial units that are expensive and work very well; some use grinding wheels or sanding belts. Then there is the more common and familiar method of hand grinding or filing.

During the sharpening of the blade, try to maintain a 30-degree angle on the cutting edge, using consistent strokes along the top edge of the blade. Don't grind or attempt to sharpen the blade on the bottom of the cutting edge. Alternate sharpening one edge of the blade, then the other, trying to remove the same amount of material from both cutting edges. Once you are satisfied that the blade is sharp, check the balance of the blade before reinstalling it onto the deck.

Blade balancing is often overlooked in the process of blade maintenance. Balancing, like sharpening, can be achieved in different ways—from expensive blade balancers to a nail in the wall to hang the blade horizontally. Once you place the blade on the balancer, if either end of the blade drops, you need to remove

material from that side by grinding away small amounts of metal until the blade balances.

With your blades sharp and balanced, you can reinstall them on your deck. Gear-driven decks have a blade hub and trash guard that the blade attaches to; belt-driven decks do not. Two shear bolts (10-24x5/8-inch stainless steel machine screws) mount the blade to the hub. These are designed to protect the blade drive gearbox from damage if a blade encounters a shock load, such as rocks, metal or ground. They are necessary to protect your deck drive system.

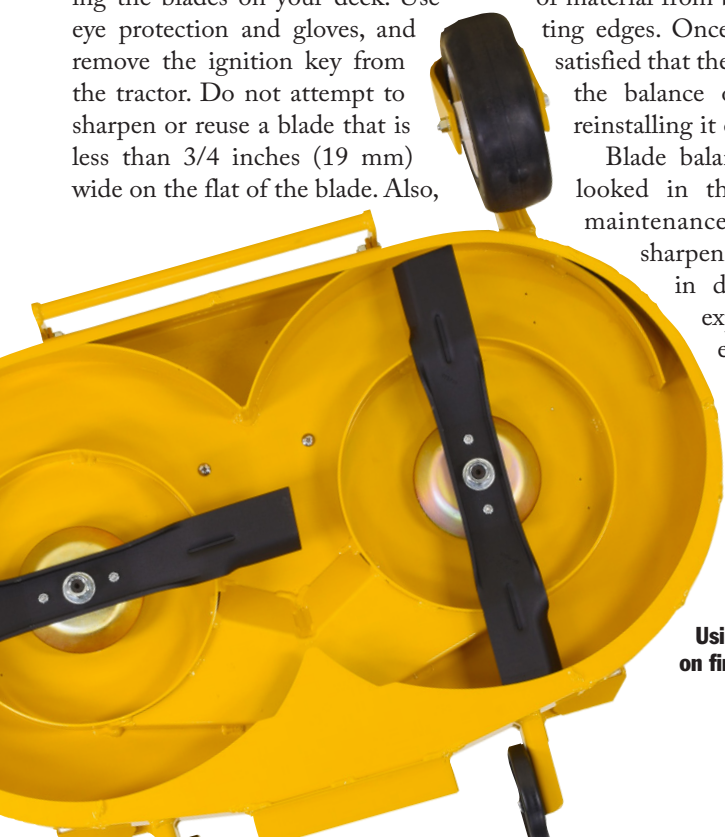
Install the 5/8-18 blade mount nut, and with a torque wrench, tighten the nut to 60 pound-feet (81 newton meters).

Over-tightening may result in the shear bolts not shearing on impact, causing damage to the gearbox, whereas under-tightening may cause nuisance shearing. Belt-driven deck blade nuts need to be torqued to 70 pound-feet (90 newton meters).

The thought of blade maintenance and its relevance may not have occurred to you in the past, but my hope is that this information may help you understand its importance in the overall maintenance of your Walker Mower. This simple blade maintenance tutorial can help you maximize the value of your Walker Mower investment and give you many years of satisfaction with your purchase. **WT**

It is recommended that you inspect your blades every 10 hours of use for dullness, bends, cracks or nicks in the cutting edges.

Using reverse rotation blades, the C36R deck is designed to evenly cut thinner grass on finished turf, and is ideal for tight spaces and fitting through narrow gates.



Walker Opens Distributing Company

In October 2018, with several open territories available and needing a distributor, Walker Manufacturing Company took the opportunity to start a wholly owned subsidiary company, Walker Distributing Company. The territory being covered is the majority of Texas, Kansas and Tennessee, all of Kentucky, and the Oklahoma Panhandle. The new company joins 48 other Walker distributors worldwide in supplying Walker Mowers, attachments and service parts to dealers throughout their territories.

Alan Metzger was named general manager of the new distributing company. Metzger is from the Fort Collins, Colorado area and is new to Walker, but has 30 years of experience in sales, marketing and engineering. He was previously employed at General Motors, Woodward and General Electric.



Walker customers and potential customers can expect to see increased Walker activity in the five-state market area as Walker Distributing Company indicates it is going to be investing heavily in market development, dealer development and dealer support in the new territory.

Bob Walker, president of Walker Manufacturing Company, says forming the new distributing company affirms Walker's commitment to the distributor-dealer marketing channel as the best way to market. "We believe the best way for our dealers and customers to get full value from our product is through the dedication of strong distributors who are focused on supporting sales with service," he says.

2018 FIVE-STAR DEALERS NAMED

For the third year in a row, five dealers have been honored as Five-Star Dealers. This recognition is given after a group of top-tier dealers are nominated by their distributor, then the final five are selected by the Walker factory team. Being a Five-Star Dealer is a lifetime achievement award and is given only once to any dealer. Congratulations to the 2018 Five-Stars—you can take pride in being recognized as the best of the best Walker dealers around the world.

The 2018 Five-Star Dealer list includes:

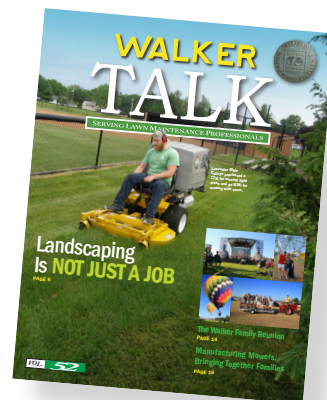
- 1 **Clark County Lawn & Tractor**
Kevin Williquette
Vancouver, Washington
- 2 **Andover Lawn Equipment**
TJ McClure and Chris Berry
Andover, Kansas
- 3 **Wilkinson Supply**
Matt and Kathy Wilkinson
Ogden, Utah
- 4 **KanEquip**
Jim Meinhardt
Wamego, Kansas
- 5 **Power Equipment Plus**
Joe and Phyllis Morgano, and
Richie and Stephanie Morgano
East Hampton, New York

ASIAN DISTRIBUTORS ADDED

Two new Asian distributors have joined the Walker marketing program and are introducing the Walker Mower in their countries. Walker Manufacturing welcomes Velocity Sports Equipment's Yap Yeow Kuen in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and EZOX Corporation's Yoshiyuki Miura in Shari-T, Shari-D, Hokkaido, Japan to the Walker program.

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LARGE 52-INCH MULCH DECK (DM52-2)

Walker introduces its largest two-blade mulch deck.

This on-purpose 52-inch mulch deck features serrated wing-style blades with a recirculating hub, similar to the blade

system used on the current 42- and 48-inch mulch decks. Another new feature is adding replaceable deck wear edges and stronger deck edge stiffeners for extra durability. Tractor Models B23i, D and T are recommended for using this deck.



HEATER FOR H37i OPERATOR CAB

The A33 Operator Hard Cab fitted on the Model H37i can now include an optional 500-watt electric heater. The 50-amp electric charging system of the H37i engine provides the necessary power for the heater. The heater blower sends warm air toward the operator and the windshield for defrosting, providing a comfortable space for the operator. The heater kit is P/N 2200-24.

▶ OPTIONAL FRONT-MOUNT CUP HOLDER AVAILABLE

A unique front-mount cup holder, designed to fit all Walker Mowers, places the cup in front of the operator in an easy-to-reach position. Featuring all-steel construction, the cup holder fits a wide variety of cups, and the hinged design makes it easy to retract for clearance when the deck is tilted up or tractor body is opened. The item is easily installed using existing holes and one bolt, and fits on all earlier models (equipped with a deck tilt-up latch). See more details at www.walker.com/addons/cupholder. Order P/N 5744-9.



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