

[Know Your Mom and Pop: M + L Landscaping](#)



No one expected it to happen, but the air started to get warmer in the middle of March and the multiple inches of snow that fell this winter were completely melted by early April. People gazed in awe at the grass in their yard, not quite sure what to make of this newfound not-snow. The novelty wore off after by the end of April and people started to dread yard maintenance. Some people enjoy the sweat, the dirt and the aching body after a day bent over in the yard. For others, there's M + L Landscaping.

M + L Landscaping provides full service landscaping for every season. This includes lawn moving, fertilizer programs, aeration, over seeding, bush/shrub trimming, and installation of bushes, shrubs, small trees and seasonal flowers. They also do spring and fall clean-ups, minor tree work (accessible by ladder), patio installation, walkway paving and limited block wall construction. M + L Landscaping also offers snow plowing and snow removal during the winter months.



Mike Underwood was retiring from the military after 23 years of service. Still young enough and not quite ready for the sit-back-and-relax-a-bit retired life, he started planning a post military life that he would enjoy and would best benefit his family. He started doing construction work with a friend, but the housing market crash led him to landscaping. He was mentored by one friend and got advice from another. This experience showed him that this was something he wanted to pursue as a small business.

Underwood didn't have a specific business plan, but knew the basic steps to take to get started. By April 2009, he had everything ready to start on his new path. He invested approximately \$12,000 in equipment and set out with a flyer campaign that netted him 15 customers off the bat. He had a one-two

punch of quality landscaping and stellar customer service, which led to growth via word of mouth. M + L Landscaping was in the midst of building something special.

“At the start of my third year, I had to make a decision,” Underwood said. “Do I grow and take on more work or stay as a single employee company. I decided my work is selling itself and I wanted to grow.” M + L Landscaping currently has approximately 60 residential customers and seven commercial properties. The \$12,000 of equipment has blossomed into a rented shop in Warwick, four trucks, two trailers and about \$50,000 in specialty equipment. The one-man shop turned into a crew of three to five, all with the ability to work to the high quality of standards Underwood expects from his employees.

Though he has a crew to help with the manual labor, Underwood wears all of the hats on the business side of things. He does the bookkeeping, acts as the human resources department and the complaint department, and even considers himself the IT guy. He trains each new staff member personally, becoming the “instructor, trainer and mentor.”

Some of Underwood’s greatest moments involve giving back to the community. He proudly talks of the time he helped build a playground for a girl making a wish with A Wish Come True. He also spent some time working with detention students and helped landscape a teacher memorial garden for a ceremony at a junior high school. Underwood expects M + L Landscaping to give back to the community as much as possible.

In the long run, Underwood has high hopes for M + L Landscaping. He is considered a small company by industry standards, but he wants to grow into a well-known landscaper that people and businesses call because they know that they are getting quality service. He wants to hire more employees. He wants to prove that quantity doesn’t have anything to do with quality. “I see myself growing to 100 to 120 customers while still proving that the work can be done professionally and picture perfect.”

M & L Landscaping

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