

Friday, July 24, 2009

Low-maintenance but high growth

Charlotte Business Journal - by [Adam O'Daniel](#) Staff writer



photo ADAM O'DANIEL
Mark Smith

Mark Smith's company specializes in landscape maintenance, yet he advocates low-maintenance landscape designs. It's a strategy that's paying dividends as consumers look for ways to go green and save money at the same time.

Smith, owner of Charlotte's **Environmental Design Landscape Inc.**, says his ideas have potential to change the landscaping industry and preserve resources at the same time.

How is your philosophy different from competitors?

Years ago, I found myself having to over-maintain in order to satisfy the client. With that in mind, I landscaped my home on a completely low-maintenance model as an experiment. Then we studied low- and moderate-maintenance plants and made that the focus of our business.

We explain to customers that high-maintenance plants eventually take away from asset value because they have to be pruned, watered and fertilized so much more often. With proper choices and planning in the beginning, we can avoid all of that, and it actually adds value for the customer.

What future landscaping trends are you preparing for?

I think water is going to be the next oil. We need to adjust the aesthetic expectations of the community. We have this belief that everything should be lush and green and growing 365 days a year. In reality, we shouldn't expect that.

How have personal experiences shaped your business style?

I started as the 10-year-old kid mowing grass in the neighborhood. When I started my business out of my home in 1998, I was completely self-taught. And that's the attitude and culture I have with my employees. We're always learning together. And it's been a huge factor. We're fortunate to be a low-turnover company in a high-turnover industry.

QUICKINFO

VITAL STATS

•**Mark Smith** says he follows this motto: "Design with the end in mind."

•**Smith also** operates an office in Greenville, S.C. His clients include Crosland, Duke Energy Corp., Greenville Technical College, Colonial Properties Trust and Grubb Properties.

•**Details:** www.edlnc.com
aodaniel@bizjournals.com