

# Pro-Green

## TOTAL LAWN CARE INC.

### A "Growing" Business For Over Twenty Years

More than two decades ago, as Brian Mitchell was juggling a full-time corporate job and moonlighting in his solo lawn-mowing business, he knew something had to give. That something was the corporate job. Mitchell wanted to be in control of his own destiny, said good-bye to the "regular" job and never looked back.

After 12 years with Dillons, Mitchell opened Pro-Green Total Lawn Care Inc. in 1995 with one other employee; today he is owner/president of the company that employs 15 people. Pro-Green has enjoyed steady growth since its birth at a temporary location on Washington Street to become a diversified, one-stop, lawn-care company.

The year after the opening, Pro-Green moved to 1720 Main where it remains today. "I wanted my side job to become my day job," Mitchell explained. "It was a leap of faith. You can't give 100 percent in two directions."

Mitchell bought Workman's Greener Lawns from Larry Workman in 1996 and Turf Services from Max Roberts the following year. At the time, he added granular fertilization and aeration services.

Other additions during the late 1990s and early 2000s included industrial weed control; tree removal, trimming and spraying; lawn renovation and over-seeding; and complete sprinkler-system installation and repair. Pro-Green also branched out into the retail side of the business and now maintains one of the largest inventories of turf equipment in Barton County.

The inventory includes Hustler, Toro and Walker turf equipment, and Echo outdoor power equipment. Mitchell also added trailer sales this year. The range of equipment goes from the simplest walk-power mower to the top-of-the-line industrial machine.



Owner Brian Mitchell finishes a sales quote for a new customer. Mitchell employs 15 people, with two in the office and the rest in the field completing mowing, spraying, fertilizing, installation, and maintenance projects.

"As the industry has evolved, we have more than kept up with the pace," Mitchell said. "Diversification is important because you don't have to rely on one thing. We also have satellite locations in Hutchinson and Russell, and there is more expansion in the works."

Mitchell's 25-year-old son, Dillon, has played an instrumental role in growing the retail side of the business since his graduation from Barton Community College. "Dillon came to work here and has been a big part of the retail," Mitchell said. "He is the next generation in the lawn industry."

Other Pro-Green employees have been the heart and soul of the business for many years. "Honestly," Mitchell said, "I have been blessed with highly skilled people who are loyal. Many have been here for more than 10 years and some close to 20 years."

"The people who work here like our customers and vice versa," he continued. "We know what gate to use at their homes and we know their dogs' names. We also use Facebook and texting, which the customers like. And in July, we will have a great new website. We are pushing the envelope with service."

"We have many of the original customers we had when we opened in 1995," he elaborated. "There is a strong customer retention rate. That tells you a lot."

The company's service territory includes a 30-mile radius of Great Bend, with many customers in Larned, Ellinwood and St. John. Many of the jobs in various Pro-Green divisions mandate strict standards and licensure, which result in safety and customer confidence. "We also are sensitive about hazardous chemicals and do our part to protect the environment," Mitchell noted. "We live here and our families live here. We are sensitive to all of it."

Pro-Green folks, who understand there are a lot of do-it-yourselfers out there, are available to answer questions too. "For example," the owner said, "if you want to renovate a lawn, we will offer advice about how to do it; we will coach you with free advice. We will say 'this is what works for us.'"

"Usually," he added, "some of the do-it-yourselfers have taken a few swings at it themselves and need some guidance."

And then there are those who simply don't want to mess with lawn care and others who don't have time. "Timing is everything in this business considering the seasonal needs," Mitchell said. "We will design a better system for our customers. We are aware of the sunny and shady areas of a lawn and know what will grow in each location."

"We also know you don't want water from the lawn sprinklers hitting your windows," he continued. "We consider all this and look ahead 20 years while designing a landscaping plan."

Pro-Green always is aware of these different customer needs. Some just "want an okay lawn with no weeds; and then there are what we call 'extreme lawn lovers,'" Mitchell remarked. "We take care of both extremes and everything in between." —

