



PROPANE-FUELED MOWERS BUILD COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR FLORIDA LAWN CARE COMPANY

Reduced costs, environmental benefits crucial for Sarasota's Greenscape Services

AT A GLANCE

Industry

Commercial lawn care

Company

Greenscape Services,
Sarasota, Fla.

Challenge & Solution

Hold down costs and enhance business sustainability through introduction of three propane-fueled commercial mowers to the company's fleet of 15 commercial mowers.

Benefits of Propane

- Estimated 30 percent fuel savings.
- Approximately 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared with gasoline-fueled commercial mowers.
- Convenience of weekly delivery of replacement cylinders directly to company headquarters.
- Less monthly fuel price volatility with contract.
- No reduction in power and blade speed necessary to cut grass quickly and effectively.



Greenscape Services, a full-service horticulture company based in Sarasota, Fla., has responded to growing customer interest in cost-efficiency and sustainability by adding three propane-fueled commercial mowers to its fleet in the last two years.

Owner Shannon Wilson estimates that he has saved approximately 30 percent on fuel with the propane-fueled commercial mowers, creating a major price advantage further enhanced by the ease of maintenance and fuel delivery. Heritage Propane conveniently delivers replacement cylinders directly to his facility each week. Propane-fueled commercial mowers also produce about half the greenhouse gas emissions of gasoline-fueled commercial mowers, an environmental benefit that has helped Wilson differentiate his business from competitors and attract new customers.

The cost, sustainability, and convenience benefits, coupled with the fact that propane-fueled commercial mowers match the power, performance, and fuel economy of gasoline-fueled commercial mowers, led Wilson to one simple conclusion:

"I'll never buy another gasoline-fueled commercial mower if I can help it," he said, adding that he plans to replace all his existing gasoline-fueled commercial mowers with propane-fueled counterparts.

Significant cost, maintenance benefits

Wilson, whose business serves a range of residential and commercial customers, purchased two Encore Power Equipment propane-fueled commercial mowers from Onyx Environmental Solutions, a North Carolina-based firm that converts gasoline-fueled commercial mowers for propane operation. The third is a demonstration model on loan from a manufacturer. Greenscape Services is a field demonstration site for manufacturers like Ferris and Snapper Pro, including testing and providing feedback on their respective propane-fueled commercial mowers.

Greenscape Services' propane-fueled commercial mowers meet the rigorous workload requirement of the business: approximately 40 hours per week in the summer and 20 hours per week in the winter. In fact, they tend to run every day instead of rotating in and out of use like the company's gasoline-fueled commercial mowers. Power and blade speed cut grass quickly and effectively turn clippings into mulch.

Equally important, especially to company profitability and ability to compete for jobs, Wilson's propane-fueled commercial mowers require less maintenance than his gasoline-fueled commercial mowers. Oil and filter purchases and disposal fees have been reduced significantly because fewer oil changes are required. In addition, staff time dedicated to maintenance has decreased.

Refueling the propane-fueled commercial mowers is virtually seamless and less time-consuming. Heritage Propane delivers replacement cylinders to the facility weekly, eliminating the need for employees to travel to the filling station on company time. Wilson purchases propane on a monthly contract basis, which helps minimize price volatility commonly experienced with gasoline — a major advantage in a flat-rate contract business like lawn care. Furthermore, Greenscape Services' fuel supply is more secure because propane does not lend itself to leaks, spills, or theft.



A more environmentally friendly fuel

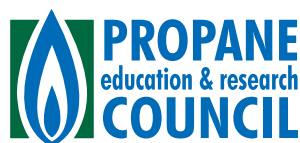
Propane's environmental benefits create another competitive advantage for Greenscape Services. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by about half, propane-fueled commercial mowers can decrease other hazardous and smog-forming emissions like carbon monoxide by more than 80 percent compared with gasoline-fueled commercial mowers. These benefits have helped Wilson attract new customers interested in decreasing their carbon footprint by employing more sustainable solutions.

"If we don't start thinking about taking better care of the planet for our kids, we'll all be in a lot of trouble," Wilson said. "Educating my customers and giving them greener options are things I can do to make a difference."

Adding propane-autogas-fueled work vehicles

Wilson wants to take another step toward a more sustainable operation by purchasing work vehicles that operate on propane autogas, fuel for on-road vehicles, like Ford F-Series trucks by Roush CleanTech. He plans to replace gasoline- and diesel-fueled trucks used to haul commercial mowers and personnel to and from customer sites with propane-autogas-fueled trucks to continue building Greenscape Services' environmental and cost-competitive advantages. Like the conversion to propane-fueled commercial mowers, Wilson expects a smooth transition when he begins shifting his business to trucks that operate on propane autogas.

The Propane Education & Research Council was authorized by the U.S. Congress with the passage of Public Law 104-284, the Propane Education and Research Act (PERA), signed into law on October 11, 1996. The mission of the Propane Education & Research Council is to promote the safe, efficient use of odorized propane gas as a preferred energy source.



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