

Team Turf



The Evergreen team, from top left going clockwise: Bob Stell, Mike Fincutter, Mickey Bittenbender, Alejandro Ortiz, Rebecca LaBarre, Kathy Edgcombe, Vicki Dolan and Asta Dzeveckaite.

COMPANY PROFILE

EVERGREEN LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATES LLC, LAKE IN THE HILLS, ILL.

Principals: Bob Stell, owner

Applications: Residential and commercial landscape architecture, construction, maintenance

Cat® Dealer: Patten CAT

Landscape architecture, construction, maintenance is a quality group effort for this Illinois firm

Soon after Bob Stell took possession of his first new Cat® 287B Multi Terrain Loader last year, he put it to the test. The landscape project was to plant trees on a steep berm along the edge of a new residential subdivision. Stell had purchased the machine after seeing a Multi Terrain Loader demonstration at the Caterpillar assembly plant in Sanford, N.C. "Seeing that machine operate in North Carolina, I knew it would be better than tires on top soil, the way the rubber tracks spread the weight onto the ground."

The tracks are gentle on the turf, causing minimal disturbance. Their expansive "footprint" offers flotation in fragile conditions. Stell also discovered on the berm project the stability, traction and speed of the rubber track machines. "We augured in 173 trees that first day," recalls the owner of Evergreen Landscape Associates LLC in Lake in the Hills, Ill.

Long-term Customer Service

Stell, a licensed landscape architect, set up Evergreen in 1995 as a full turnkey operation concentrating primarily on the Chicagoland's western suburbs. While the company has grown to 60 employees during the high season, Stell's crews are still maintaining many of his earliest installations from 1995. According to Vicki Dolan, Evergreen accountant, their work is 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial. Two thirds of the company revenue stems from design/build projects — which includes both landscape and hardscape projects — and a third from maintenance contracts. Evergreen has a stable of about 350 maintenance accounts.

"We may not always be the cheapest, but we offer the customer service and quality," says Dolan. "People will see what Bob's done on another job and call us."

Stell does little advertising, relying instead on customers' word-of-mouth. He stays active in various professional landscape organizations, as well as civic organizations such as the local chamber of commerce. What he sells is a quality, professional image right down to the uniforms his crews wear and the paint scheme of his trucks.

Early on, Stell committed his enterprise to doing quality work — the key to Evergreen's longevity. "You

can still start in this business with a shovel and a rake," says Stell. "My competition may be a guy with a pickup. He may install a patio and two years later when that patio is failing, he'll be gone."

Evergreen offers a three-year warranty on plant materials and a five-year warranty on hardscape work. "I'm trying to establish a long-term relationship with our new customers. The warranties are my way to show customers that we will stand behind our work."

MTL Versatility

Landscape maintenance doesn't stop with the first frost, either. Evergreen crews maintain properties through the winter with contracts to remove snow and ice. The company's two 287B Multi Terrain Loaders are equipped with a variety of buckets and blades, including blades with rubber edges to protect driveway surfaces during snow removal. The rubber tracks not only offer superb traction in snow and ice, but also protect decorative driveway surfaces that Evergreen crews initially designed and constructed.



"When you see how Caterpillar treats their customers, you know they are a quality company."

— Bob Stell, Evergreen Landscape Associates, Lake in the Hills, Ill.

As a contractor who's built a business on quality customer service, Stell knows it when he sees it. He says the folks at his local Caterpillar dealership, Patten Cat, were aware of Evergreen's problems with their previous brand of machines, and worked hard to demonstrate the versatility and reliability of Cat Multi Terrain Loaders. Through the dealership, trips were arranged to Caterpillar headquarters in Peoria, Ill., and to the North Carolina plant.

Those two trips left an indelible mark on Stell: "When you see how Caterpillar treats their customers, you know they are a quality company." 

