



REMEMBERING THEIR ROOTS, YARDWORKS

Yardworks has become the largest mulch provider for the Memphis, Tennessee area by both hard work and retail smarts. By retail smarts, Bill Wardlaw, owner of Yardworks, Tennessee, Inc., has focused especially on what a niche of customers wants and then built on meeting their needs at the price they are willing to pay.

“I started cutting lawns as a part time job going to school, just like a million other guys in their teens and 20’s, and people kept asking me about mulch. I started buying more and more mulch for the lawn-mowing customers that I had. I was ultimately introduced to a man in the area who had a big mulch business and I started buying so much mulch from him that he said, ‘you ought to open your own yard on the other side of town and I’ll supply you.’

But, unfortunately for his first supplier, it didn’t work out so well. It could have, but his supplier resented the competition. “I kept buying more and more mulch from the guy and he said I was cutting into his business,” says Wardlaw. “He said I was too aggressive.” His supplier upped the cost and said he was going to put Yardworks out of business.

Wardlaw rose to the challenge. He bought his own grinder and started providing his own mulch by buying brush and handling the grinding on his own.. “In 1991, I bought my first grinder then the land that we’re on now in 1995. But during that time, I continued my lawn mowing business and worked at the FEDEX distribution center in Memphis at night to pay the bills.



Bill Wardlaw left, with his son Chad Wardlaw, Manager of the colored mulch operation, right.

(TOP) Yardworks' new 70TM parallel lift loader loads a 13' 6" walking floor bulk trailer with colored mulch.

“With my first supplier of mulch, I sold the material cheap enough, with a low markup, that I was able to really establish a market. And I treated my customers right. I really worked to give them first class service. The business did start to snowball. As the business grew, I worked to figure out how I could continue the pace. As I built up the yard I sold the grass cutting business and concentrated on selling wholesale.

The company bought a new Morbark 1300 Grinder and some used wheel loaders to charge the grinder and load the company's first used walking floor trailer. They also bought a tractor and a used dump truck to make deliveries to large wholesale mulch landscapers.

Yardworks' first Kawasaki-KCM loader, a 65ZV2, loading a landscaper's trailer.



"My goal was to buy a piece of equipment with cash or if I borrowed, pay it off before I bought another," notes Wardlaw. The company grew. "I bought a few new wheel loaders, notably Volvo, because of deals and financing. I bought a variety of model sizes from their larger L110 loader to the smaller L70 model and then, with my newest model, I heard of problems with their tier 4 design."

Yardworks, of course, is in the business of grinding and moving dusty wood products with high dust content.

Says Eric Hinshaw, VP, HMI, the Kawasaki-KCM dealer for Tennessee, "I've been working with Bill for 20 years. I used to also be in the grinding business and I admire his success.

"Ten years ago, I moved to selling equipment and three years ago, I put together a package for Bill that included multiple Diamond Z grinders, Kawasaki-KCM loaders, a Linkbelt excavator and multiple screens. My goal was to put together a financed package that let Bill grow with the best equipment I thought would work for him, with the best financing possible.

"Bill went from a mix of 3 loader sizes to two, with a focus on the 70 and 90 loaders, with the exception of a 70 Taskmaster for retail. The 70 loaders are used for nearly everything. The 70 Taskmaster is used with both forks and bucket to load customer trucks and trailers with landscape rock and bulk colored mulch bags."

CUSTOMER CONCERN KEY

"Providing double hammered mulch is pretty straight forward," notes Wardlaw. "Creating customers who buy more and more, is more of a challenge."

When Wardlaw was starting up in the landscaping business, he'd often get a load in the evening and bring it home, parking it in his garage or covering it, with his wife's help. This prompted him to help his own landscaper customers. "Now, we have a separate building on our yard that we rent out with



Kawasaki-KCM 90ZV loader charging the hopper of a Diamond Z1463B Grinder.

separate bays where the landscaper can leave their truck or trailer overnight or in inclement weather. They basically work out of our place and are our customer.

"We are very aggressive in our deliveries of material and achieve quite a following by delivering small loads of bulk material to the jobsite. In addition to pure mulch, we've also branched into a variety of top soil mixes, and landscape rock" says Wardlaw.

The company has developed a wholesale clientele that spans a 200-mile radius of Memphis with a host of semi-wholesale landscapers in the general Memphis area who gladly order mulch by the truck load to be dumped near their commercial worksite.

I REALLY LIKE THE PACKAGE

"The Kawasaki-KCM loaders are great; I especially like the low risk of fire with our 70 model Kawasaki-KCM loaders. Kawasaki-KCM parts are lower in cost as well, compared to the parts for our previous loaders that I had been buying," notes Wardlaw. "Our first introduction to the Kawasaki-KCM line was with the 65 model and it has performed quite well. Our newer models are also working well. We are very satisfied with our dealer and the Kawasaki-KCM loaders."

Serviced by Heavy Machines, Inc., Memphis, TN