Is it possible for an amateur landscaper such as myself to have an influence on a professional landscaping company’s service methods? Prior to reading Joan Nassauer’s article regarding care and stewardship of a landscape I certainly didn’t think so. However, Professor Nassauer’s article on care and stewardship in the landscape reminded me of a particular incident that occurred several years ago and helped me to view it through a whole new perspective. When I was in high school, my grandmother lived in a relatively nice housing development. A portion of the annual fees that she and the other residents paid to the homeowners association helped to pay for the lawn maintenance that was provided to the neighborhood. The landscaping company that was contracted to maintain the neighborhood lawns did a decent job. However, I honestly felt that I could do a better job at maintaining my grandmother’s lawn. As a result, I began caring for her lawn every week during the summer. The landscaping company was scheduled to visit the neighborhood every Thursday for their routine maintenance. I would drive over to my grandmother’s house on Wednesday afternoons and mow the lawn before the landscaping crew had the chance to do so. One of the things that the crew always neglected was edging the sidewalks and driveways in the neighborhood. It always bugged me that they did not handle this. So, I began edging the sidewalk and driveway in front of my grandmother’s house after I mowed the lawn. It was amazing to see how crisp and neat the lines looked after the grass runners that were shooting out into the concrete were eliminated. Apparently my grandmother’s neighbors also thought that the edging had greatly improved the aesthetics of the yard. They made several irate phone calls to the landscaping company wanting to know why their sidewalks and driveways were not being cared for in this fashion. My grandmother had to explain to the neighbors that I was the one who took the initiative to edge the sidewalks and driveways, not the landscaping company. This prompted several of the neighbors to request that I mow their lawns, as well. From that point on, the landscaping company incorporated the edging into their maintenance routine and the results have been spectacular. This brings me back to Professor Nassauer’s concept of care and stewardship in a landscape. Her article explains that once human beings are presented with visual evidence of care and stewardship in a landscape, a strong response is often generated, particularly when aesthetics are involved. My grandmother’s neighbors saw how much more aesthetically appealing their property could look if the sidewalks and driveways had simply been edged. As a result, their response to the landscaping company was swift and strong. Prior to reading Joan Nassauer’s article, I never really considered the specific reasons why the neighbors had such a strong response. I now know that once they were presented with pleasurable aesthetics in the landscape, the neighbors were yearning for more. It is for this very reason that I will strive to be thorough and complete in all of my landscaping endeavors. You never know who might be paying attention.

Photo retrieved from: http://www.millenniumland.com/Lawn%20Maintenance%20Services.htm


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