

Garrick-Santo Landscape Company

A One-Stop Shop for Everything to Do With the Outdoors

by Pamela Schweppe

As every unit owner knows, being a member of an association's board of trustees can be a thankless task, involving many volunteer hours — often in an area not within his or her expertise. So it's no wonder that board members are grateful for vendors who can provide superior service in myriad different functions with a single phone call.

One such board member is Marie DePaolis, a trustee of Salem Place Condominiums in Revere, Mass. Two years ago, the board decided to replace a deteriorating set of stairs and a wall constructed of railroad ties. It turned to its landscaper, Garrick-Santo, for help. "They took the whole thing apart and put in nice brick steps and a block wall," DePaolis reports. "I was shocked when I learned they could do all that. We get quotes, but why go with other people when they do the best job?"

Living Up to Their Motto

Based in Malden, Mass., Garrick Landscape Company was founded by Richard (Rick) Gottschalk Jr. in 1981 and became Garrick-Santo Landscape Co. in 2003, when Gottschalk joined forces with Robert (Rob) Santo of Santo Landscape Services. Throughout that history of more than 30 years, "we care" has been the guiding philosophy of both principals. "We don't want to just serve our clients," explains Anita Gottschalk, the company's design install manager. "We want to partner with them."

To Santo, that means going beyond simply showing up with a lawnmower. It means being strategic about what

the association needs — and can afford — to give it the greatest curb appeal. "We try to meet with our clients once a month to find out what their needs are and to see what we can do within their budget and environmental concerns," he says. "We don't want to just put stuff in. We want to be sure it looks right and the money is well spent."

That level of care is one reason why Garrick-Santo has been the landscaper for Dexter Estates of Malden, Mass., for 15 years — and counting. Over the years, the company has not only kept the lawn healthy, they have pruned branches off cherry trees so squirrels wouldn't jump onto the roofs, planted trees, provided spring cleanup, cured a patch of diseased lawn, trimmed shrubs around the pool area, and more. "One of the biggest selling points here is the curb appeal," says Lorraine Rava, chairperson of the board. "Everything looks neat and clean. The workers do a nice job, and the people in the office are really nice, too. We're very pleased with their service."

Digging Deeper

Among the landscaping services provided by Garrick-Santo are design, installation, enhancement, masonry, hardscaping, and maintenance. Providing this level of service are more than 35 full-time landscape professionals, as well as administrative, field management, sales, and training staff. Staff is available to handle emergencies 24/7.

Occasionally, a client will request a service that falls outside the scope of traditional landscaping, such as painting, lighting — or even the installation

of a flagpole. Garrick-Santo strives to offer complete customer satisfaction nevertheless. "We have a wide network of vendors we can call on," Gottschalk says. "We want clients to call us first whenever they have an issue. We can help with a single phone call."

To determine exactly what services are best suited to each individual association, Mandi Maloney, the company's forward deployed horticulturist, has developed a proprietary request for proposal (RFP). The RFP form itemizes specific services the company provides, with choices that include spring cleanup, mulching, weekly maintenance, lawn care and fertilizer, irrigation, flowerscaping, fall cleanup, and more. The association board simply checks off the tasks it would like done. "It eliminates us guessing and gets them involved," Santo explains. "And it keeps everyone informed."

If a bidding situation is involved, Garrick-Santo is even willing to share the information it gathers on the RFP with its competitors. "That way, everyone is bidding on the same things," Santo says. "That's very important, especially in the condo market. It saves time, and property managers are very happy to get the information. It helps everyone."

It also helps Garrick-Santo devise an action plan for each client. The company takes pride in the time taken to create the right strategy to meet each association's needs. "People don't realize what it takes," Gottschalk says. "We feel we start working on a project the moment we meet the client. By the time the crew shows up, a lot of

behind-the-scenes work happens to get everything organized and get the information dispatched.”

No Business Like Snow Business

One aspect of the business that requires a surprising amount of pre-planning is snow removal — one of the major services Garrick-Santo provides. “Over the winter, you don’t have to call in another contractor,” Santo says. “We treat snow removal as an emergency service. It’s a massive operation, and we want to be ready whenever we need to get going.”

Preparation for the winter season begins as early as August, as Garrick-Santo readies its equipment and begins determining where it can be stored so as not to inconvenience unit owners. When winter arrives and a storm is predicted, the team readies a “hot list” that prioritizes its plowing schedule, so those who need to get out first, can.

Some properties, such as Pomeworth Condominiums of Stoneham, Mass., pose extra challenges when it comes to snow removal. “It’s a difficult lot,” admits Carolyn Smith, managing agent for A.R.K. Management Co. of Stoneham, the association’s property management firm. “It’s crowded, and there’s no place to pile the snow. But Garrick-Santo is able to clear the lot completely. They’re very responsive to unit owners.” In fact, Smith has been so pleased with the service provided to Pomeworth, she has recommended Garrick-Santo to other associations, such as Webster Willows in Melrose, Mass.

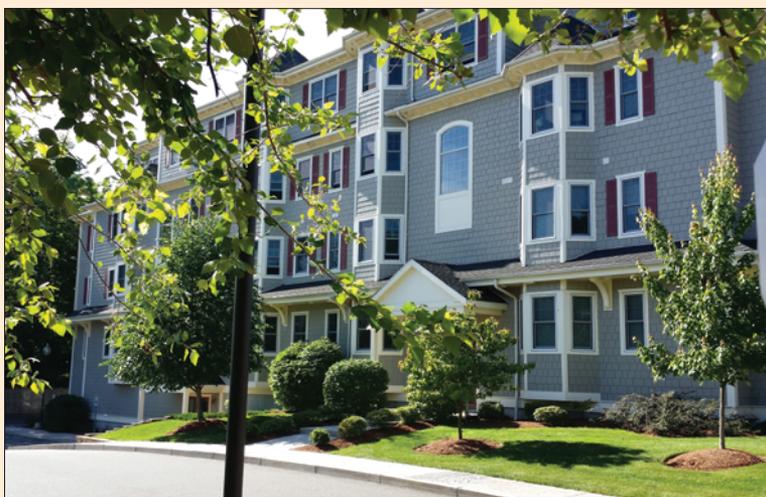
Commitment to the Environment

One of Garrick-Santo’s secret weapons is Magic Salt, a snow-melting agent that, unlike sand, doesn’t require

cleanup of roadways and hallways at the end of the season.

It also happens to be environmentally friendly. And that fits well with Garrick-Santo, which makes environmental stewardship a lynchpin of the way it does business.

For example, the company has invested in specialized landscape maintenance vehicles — transportation and storage vehicles specifically designed and constructed to enhance fuel efficiency and eliminate the need for a separate



Webster Willows in Melrose, Mass., is just one condominium complex whose curb appeal has been improved by the landscaping services of Garrick-Santo.

trailer. Further, a supplier comes to its headquarters to provide the refueling, so the trucks aren’t sitting idling at a gas station. And the company recycles whenever possible.

Sowing Seeds for the Future

Safety is also a priority at Garrick-Santo. All field employees are well trained, uniformed, and equipped with safety equipment. Some also have received successful background checks for security clearance from the Transportation Security Administration, a requirement of some clients they work with. And weekly safety meetings are held to review job safety, including standard operating procedures, safe driving, and more. “The better trained our employees are, the better the job we can do,” Santo says.

One result of that level of ongoing education are the prestigious certifications various staff members have achieved. Among them are Massachusetts Certified Landscape Professional (MCLP) and Industry Certified Landscape Manager-National (CLP). “These certifications show a real commitment from each individual to learn the trade,” Gottschalk says. “They’re not easy to get.”

The company also provides training to clients, such as holding gardening clinics for unit owners. And that’s just a fraction of the community service the team at Garrick-Santo performs. The company recently donated and planted a tree at a local school. Every Earth Day, staff members help beautify a traffic island in a local community and maintain it throughout the year.

The company also has an ongoing commitment to GreenCare for Troops, a national outreach program organized by Project EverGreen in

which volunteers provide landscaping services to families of deployed military service members. And, this year, the company will participate in Renewal & Remembrance Day, an annual day of service organized by PLANET, a professional landcare network. On this day, green industry companies from around the nation gather at Arlington National Cemetery for a beautification project.

For the staff at Garrick-Santo, it’s all part of making each community a better place to live. “Everyone has a hand in it,” Santo says. “We want everyone to have a sense of giving back.”

For more information about how Garrick-Santo Landscape Company can improve the curb appeal of your property, call 888-354-0006 or visit www.garricksanto.com.