



For longer lasting logos, start mowing more frequently before the event and mow a little lower just before painting. Photo courtesy of Mike Hebrard

Artistic Field

Learning to properly paint lawn art and incorporating the skill into your business could produce a creative, lucrative outcome.

By Mike Hebrard

When maintaining an athletic field or mowing a lawn, you can create a unique business opportunity for yourself by adding a logo to a ball field or enhancing a customer's special event with a painted lawn design. Along with the regular duties, you might consider supplementing your business with lawn art. Whether painting a logo or festive message, painted art in a featured area can make an event

more celebratory and business more profitable.

Most clients already have decided how they want the logo or design to look. You will need to scale the drawing to the desired size. When determining an appropriate location, choose an area with a slight upward slope and one that is visible from the main entryway. However, the design does not have to be on a slope and will work

fine on a flat plain.

DESIGN PHASE

There are several techniques for laying out a design. One technique is to use stencils. You can make stencils from a poly tarp (white is easier to project and mark on). A local sign painter can layout a design with a felt pen. Cut shapes with a razor knife at desired corners and features. After positioning the stencil in the chosen location, use an inverted spray can (spray chalk is also available), and spray in the cutouts. If you use the same color, it can be very difficult to spot the proper dots and fill in: connect dots of the same color using a handheld holder that attaches to the spray can and provides more reach. A long extension will give you better control and accuracy. Light coats of paint will provide better coverage and ensure you have enough paint to finish the job.

Another method is a grid technique applied to the picture or logo while it's still on paper. You draw grid lines across the text of the logo and give a number sequence with a scale relationship to the size to be painted on the lawn. Using spray chalk, mark dots on the top, bottom and both sides. Connect the dots with string and use an inverted can of the selected color. Mark spots at the reference grids and fill in.

PAPER, GLUE AND SCISSORS

When there isn't time or money to make a stencil, be creative and use string, cardboard and other objects to make designs. For example, you can use a piece of cardboard for a half shape of a bell or for the base on an angel. Most logos are made of circles, squares, triangles, stars and ellipses. A circle can be made by picking a center point, wrapping the measuring tape around the long extension and running the wheel on the ground all the way around. Make squares by using the 3 to 4 to 5

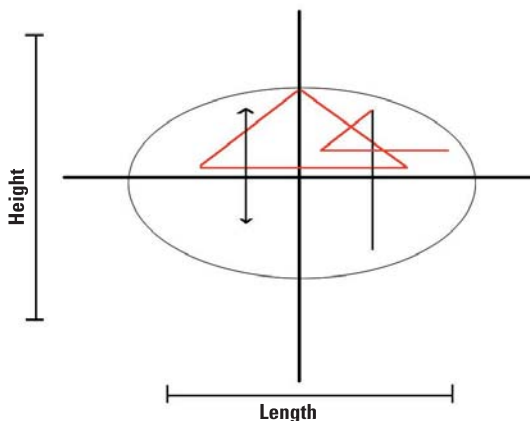


Figure 1.

method and stars by using a 7 to 6 ratio.

For an ellipse, create an axis, measure and mark the desired length and height (see Figure 1). Using half of the length, measure from the top of the vertical axis to each lateral axis. Tie a string connecting both the new end points and the one top point. Remove the top pin and use your aerosol hand painter to follow the taut string around until the ellipse is complete.

You can develop a 5-point star in a couple of ways (see Figure 2). The angle is 72 degrees, if you are able to acquire that measurement. It also has five lines of equal distance. One of the easiest methods involves using a tape measure from the middle of the star. This will be the radius point to measure the point of the star. Mark one point to start with and measure to the end of the radius to the next point of the star. The best way to describe the process is a 7 to 6 ratio. Multiply the radius of the circle by 7 and then divide by 6.

For example, on a circle with a 9-foot radius, you'd have $9 \times 7 = 63$ feet divided by $6 = 10.5$ feet. Start at the top of the circle and measure to each side of the circle until the 10.5-foot mark intersects with the arc. Repeat from that point to the next 10.5-foot mark until each of the five points of the star is marked.

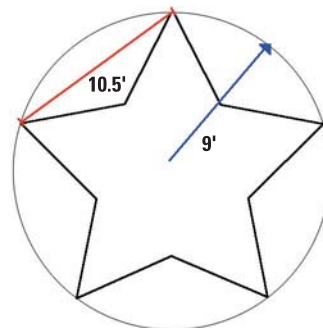


Figure 2.

Use football number stencils to help with date, ages and other numbered meanings. You can borrow these from a local high school. Black "40s" are probably the most popular statement lawn art design and easiest. Some of the other popular designs are graduations, seasonal, Christmas, Halloween and birthdays. By using a piece of cardboard with a square or rectangle cutout, you can create consistent size and spacing of text freehand. Use a string to line up the letters, and use the edge as a spacing guideline.

PAINT PRINCIPLES

There are several paint manufacturers that specialize in

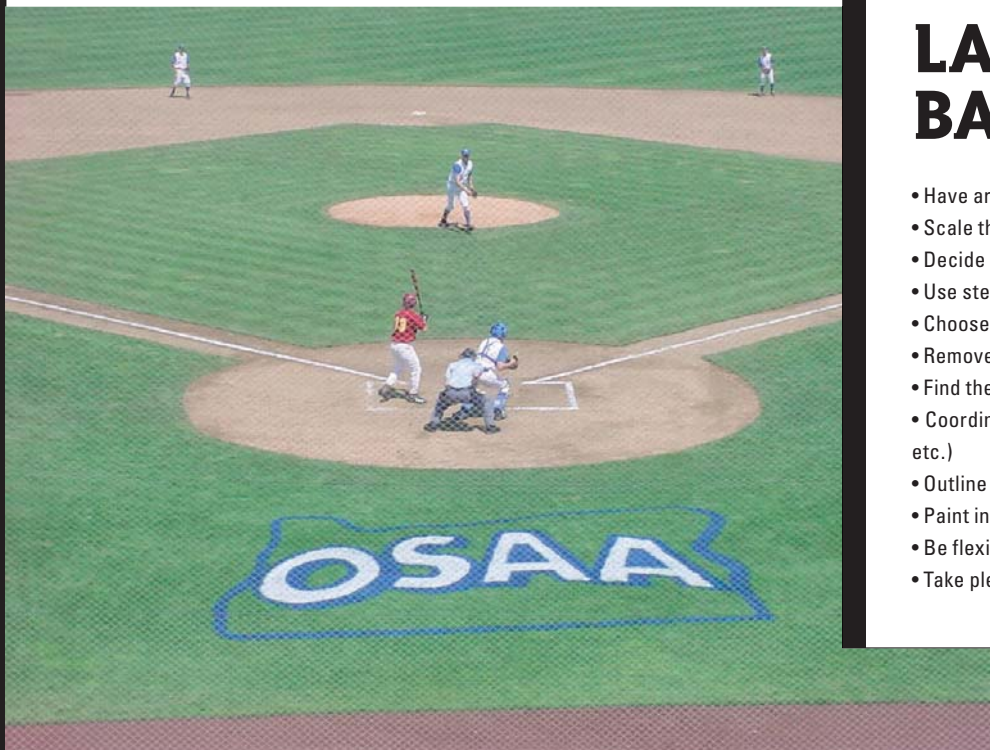
paint for athletic fields. Pioneer produces a water-based latex that is a liquid paint. It's applied with an airless sprayer and covers more area and is denser. U.S. Specialty Coatings Inc. produces an inverted aerosol that users apply with an inverted spray can. Some paint adheres to the grass blades better and others are brighter. Different colors can have drastic price differences according to the quantity and ingredient. Also, some colored paint can kill the grass if the formulation is not intended for that application. To ensure you have purchased high quality color paint, stay away from the brands that are made from a tint base. With a mild frost or rain the painted turf will lose its brightness and the grass leaves will have a white cast on them.

Aerosol cans have their place for layout and quick striping but don't provide the clarity for the cost the way a mixed paint solution applied properly does. You can mix liquid paint using a pump-up weed sprayer, which is the preferred method due to its rpm's and ability to mix more thoroughly. Other methods of mixing paint include bucket to bucket or by using a paint-mixing paddle on an electric drill.

It is best to paint a light coat first and let it dry if time permits. This will act as a primer base and allow for a brighter line. Don't paint too quickly or you will dilute the line with added water in the paint being applied and lose some of the brightness.

When using the aerosol, be careful of which inverted cans of paint you use, as some of the propellant cans discolor the grass. There are also different types of tips on the cans, a pin line style and a fan spray. A pin line can help layout the design and also can be used for fine highlighting. The fan tip will give a wider spray pattern and the width and coverage will vary as to how far from the grass it is sprayed. Caution, black or other dark colors can also be harmful to the grass blades if the area is exposed to hot direct sunlight.

The availability of an airless or compressed air sprayer can allow you to paint larger areas and get better paint coverage. Pump up sprayers are also convenient if you use many colors and are less expensive. The drying time is usually longer as more volume of paint is applied with a small amount of pressure. Replace the cone style nozzle with a flat tip to create a sharper edge and more even fill



LAWN ART BASICS

- Have artwork copy available
- Scale the drawing to your needs
- Decide on type of paint, colors
- Use stencils or make designs, shapes
- Choose a good piece of canvas (surface)
- Remove any moisture
- Find the center for the logo or design
- Coordinate color application (which to apply first, etc.)
- Outline the logo or design
- Paint in the stencils, cutouts
- Be flexible
- Take plenty of pictures

To remove logos quickly, keep mowing height consistent and apply a liquid iron or fast-release fertilizer a couple of weeks before the event. Photo courtesy of Mike Hebrard

in. You can use two by fours to form a straight edge, and paint lids can help make smaller circles.

You should replace nozzles when the spray pattern becomes distorted. Be sure to use a filter to prevent clogging as even the smallest amount of grit can quickly alter a near perfect line. Always remove the nozzle after painting, as some of the paint residue may still be in the line and settle into the lowest spot in the line plugging it up. It is also advisable to have other nozzles available in case of a plug or if a different angle is needed.

If the grass is wet, there are a couple last minute techniques to ensure a better quality line. Use a gas-powered blower to remove the larger water droplets off of grass blades. When the paint comes in contact with the heavy droplets it dilutes the painted line. Also, a long PVC ½-inch pipe or hose whipping across the turf will knock water and dew off, too. While you don't want to work with a wet lawn, you do want to work with a wet surface when placing a logo on a dirt surface such as a baseball field. Be sure to thoroughly soak the dirt before applying any paint.

For longer lasting logos, start mowing more frequently before the event and mow a little lower just before painting. For logos that you would like to remove faster, keep mowing height consistent, and mow a little lower to remove the painted grass. Also, apply a liquid iron or fast release fertilizer a couple of weeks before the event.

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Be sure to thoroughly soak a dirt surface before applying any paint. Photo courtesy of Mike Hebrard



By using a piece of cardboard with a square or rectangle cutout, you can create consistent size and spacing of text freehand. Photo courtesy of Mike Hebrard

Mike Hebrard owns Athletic Field Design (www.athleticfield.com), Clackamas, Ore.