

It's not just cutting the grass

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One of the maintenance crew's most time-consuming and important jobs is trash pickup. Flood estimated that the grounds keeping staff spends 3,400 labor hours each year picking up litter. "The cleaner the campus is, the more respected it is," he said. In the past two years, Elon has been ranked among the Top 20 Most Beautiful Campuses in the Princeton Review, a category in which students cast their vote. Flood considered the landscaping and upkeep of the campus to be a clear indication of Elon's quality as an institution. "If you're a student looking to live somewhere for four years, the landscaping is a quality cue of the institution," he said. "We have very nice architecture to complement the landscape. The landscape is the icing on the cake, filling the spaces and decorating the campus and making it functional for students."

Other jobs of the grounds keeping staff include hanging the many different banners that decorate Elon's campus. "There are 26 different banners put up for special events, such as athletic events or commencement, and these are changed about 15 times a year," Flood said.

“Some of us went to college to learn how to make the grass green.”

—Tom Flood, superintendent of Landscaping and Grounds

The truth behind the grass

One of the biggest rumors about Elon is the myth of spray painted grass. The rumor has been floating around campus for many years and is even listed on the popular web site "You Know You Go To Elon If" as one of the biggest secrets to know about the school. "The greenness of the grass isn't natural," said sophomore Danielle Strzelecki. "It's too green."

"This rumor goes back years ago," Flood said. He wanted to make everyone aware that at Elon, the grass is not spray painted. "Some of us went to college to learn how to make the grass green," he said. Years ago, the athletic fields may have been sprayed with a marker dye to see where fertilizer had been sprayed, but according to Flood, this is no longer the case. Liquid iron is sometimes added to the grass to enhance its color before important campus events, such as commencement. "Within two days, you'll see the color change," Flood said. Sophomore Kelsey Mathews didn't think the grass was spray painted. "Maybe they use funky fertilizer," she said. "But it's not spray painted."

Interesting facts

Elon, which is Hebrew for "oak," certainly has its fair share of the trees from which its name is derived. There are approximately 2,500 landscaped trees on campus, which not only provide shade and scenery, they're financially valuable as well. Trees are an asset and can be appraised and valued. Flood approximated the trees' value to be about \$3 million. "It's also important to consider the hundreds of years it took to grow some of Elon's oaks," Flood said.

In addition to the large number of landscaped trees, there are more than 25,000 pansies, 12,000 summer annuals and 50 different varieties of traditional and tropical flowers planted on campus each year. There are also 51 Cushmans and 10 golf carts frequently used by physical plant, groundskeepers and other staff members, according to Keith Dimont of Automotive Services.

Moving forward: What the future holds for grounds keeping

In November 2004, President Lambert declared the entire campus a botanical garden. According to Flood, this means that the landscaped campus will be used as an educational resource. Many plants and flowers have been labeled and trees will soon be labeled as well. Other ways in which the landscaped campus will be used as an educational resource include holding gardening and turf grass public workshops and opening two summer internships in horticulture and turf management.

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