

Did you know? Now you will!

By Pat Donovan
Contributing Writer

A couple of times a year, I have a good idea. Only a couple. This one came to me during a fall clean-up on a client's property. Perfect timing for a good idea. It took my mind off the fall clean-up. I don't really mind the clean-ups, but I would rather be informing an interested audience of some interesting facts. So here we go.

This brings up the title of this article. "Did you know"... that there is an indicator on your vehicle dashboard that informs the vehicle operator which side of the car the fuel door or fuel access is on? Did you know...that the grass strip between your sidewalk and the curb is called the parkway? While we are discussing parkways, why is it, we drive on parkways and we park on driveways? I never said all of the facts documented herein would be valuable to everyone. Anything worth learning is worth learning correctly and learning well.

The garden industry, or what is now known as the "green industry," is a virtual plethora of "did you knows." The "green environment" affects everyone on this earth, from the air we breathe to the food we eat. Think of another segment of our lives that is more important. This is assuming that all those who read this article eat and breathe. We might as well add "reads" to the list, otherwise it kind of makes continued writing senseless.

In conversations with people in this "green industry," I have found that there are many different opinions on many subjects, some true and some drastically inaccurate. Some of the falsehoods are told so often that they are believed to be true. It's kind of like that big fish you caught when you were 10 years old. It was like a gazillion feet long, right? Well, it sure seemed huge back then.

Did you know that discharging your grass clippings and not picking them up does not contribute to thatch and is actually beneficial for your lawn? Many homeowners continually remove grass

clippings from their lawns and discarding them increasing the flow of material into landfills unnecessarily. This is one of the most well known facts out there today, but grass clipping collection continues. So, if so many people continue to believe what is so well documented, what's out there that we really don't know? I used to tell clients in my previous employment that "ignorance does not make you innocent." Because you are unaware of a specific law or violation, that does not make you innocent.

Let's take a look at some "did you knows" to see how astute we really are. More importantly, how can your being unaware of some facts affect you.

Did you know that it is possible to identify how many owners have owned a used motor vehicle prior to you purchasing it by the vehicle registration number? The first number on your registration indicates how many people have owned the vehicle prior to you purchasing it.

Did you know that according to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) title 49 section 393.82 every bus, truck and truck tractor must be equipped with a working speedometer accurate to 5 mph at a speed of 50 mph?

Did you know that each truck, truck tractor, and bus must be equipped with a fire extinguisher? It is also a requirement to have a specific type of extinguisher according to your carried load. Two (2) different types of extinguishers may be required in some cases. Check out CFR title 49 sections 393.95 sub part H.

You may be interested to know that it is also a requirement to carry spare fuses to operate any part or accessory. You are required to carry one fuse of each type and size for those parts and accessories (393.95 Sub Part H (b) of the CFR).

Did you know that you are required to have warning flags displayed on your vehicle when transporting projecting loads? This means; any motor vehicle that is transporting a load which extends beyond

the sides by more than 4 inches or more than 4 feet beyond the rear must have the extremities of the load marked with red or orange florescent warning flags. Each flag must be 18 inches square CFR 393.87 (a). Did you know that; transportation of heavy vehicles, equipment and machinery which operate on wheels or tracks, such as front end loaders, bulldozers, tractors, and power shovels, and which individually weigh 10,000 pounds or more are required to be secured? This does not exclude equipment under 10,000 pounds. Section 393.130 and 393.128 of the CFR spells the requirements out in length, but basically anything you carry should be secured. There are even regulations (in great length) for carrying large rocks and boulders in or on your vehicle, 393.136 of the CFR.

Did you know that subpart B CFR 383.21 states that no person who operates a commercial motor vehicle shall at any time have more than one driver's license?

Hey Jethro, did you know that according to CFR 393.84, the flooring in all motor vehicles shall be substantially constructed, free of unnecessary holes and openings, and shall be maintained so as to minimize the entrance of fumes, exhaust gases, or fire? Floors shall not be permeated with oil or other substances likely to cause injury to persons using the floor as a traction surface. This means you have to have the holes in the floor repaired, as well as your brakes. No longer is it acceptable to use your feet as brakes, like the Flintstones.

Did you know that New Jersey Department of Labor laws, statute 12:58-3.2 clearly indicates that minors under the age of 16 years shall not be employed, permitted or suffered to work in, about, or in connection with power driven machinery. "Power driven machine" shall include: Power tools, including but not limited to, power lawn mowers, power wood working and metal working tools.

The Statute elaborates but, the moral of the story is, minors cannot operate power

equipment. Hiring a minor to cut grass in the state of New Jersey is illegal! It never made much sense to me that a minor is prohibited from using a back pack blower but, go ahead, drive 65 miles per hour in a Mustang on the Garden State Parkway at 16 years of age...legally!

Do you by chance have any of those very small dark spots on your car, fence, house, vinyl siding? Have you ever heard of artillery fungus? You can look this one up on your own. Check out "artillery fungus" on the internet. There is a ton of information on this topic. I wrote early on in this article that some of the facts contained herein would not be worthy to everyone.

Did you know that Motor Carrier Inspectors do not need reasonable suspicion or probable cause to stop a vehicle to inspect it? Do you also know that; the only agencies authorized to enforce the Code of Federal Regulations in the state of New Jersey are the New Jersey State Police and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police? This does not mean that a local police officer having reasonable suspicion or belief that you are in violation of a specific law or violation cannot summon one of these enforcement agencies to the scene of an incident to have you inspected.

Look at your New Jersey driver's license. On the top right corner of the back of your license you will see an outline of the state of New Jersey. If you are fortunate enough to have in your possession, a jeweler's glass (very powerful magnifier), you will see that this outline is written in the lettering GARDENSTATE GARDENSTATE... This is just one more way to keep the Garden State in our New Jersey lives.

As I have mentioned in previous articles, local laws and motor vehicle regulations are put in place to protect the public, which happens to include everyone, even those involved in business in the green industry. If you think back to when motor vehicles were first driven on roads, there were likely no laws or

rules. How do you think these rules came about? Contrary to what some might think, I was not around back then, but I'm thinking government officials realized that vehicular activity had to be regulated and that is how we got here today.

It is important to realize that it is extremely difficult to comply with every law, rule, ordinance and every other government regulation that is documented to be enforced. However, it is a good idea to attempt to make yourself aware of the ones that may have an effect on you. Look beyond what laws might affect you in a negative way. Look at how they can affect you in a positive way. Are you ever on the opposite side of these laws? Can you be an innocent bystander and suffer the consequence of someone else's ignorance of rules or laws? Everyone wants the law on their side in some situations. We just don't get to pick and choose when the law applies to our particular case. If you want the laws of Mother Nature on your side in most circumstances, then other societal laws must prevail as well.

In closing, I hope some of this information is helpful in your daily life. I think the thing we all want most is to arrive home safely everyday and be with our loved ones. Following the rules is just part of that routine.

Editor's Note: Patrick D. Donovan is a retired Police Officer of 27 years specializing in emergency services and fatal accident investigations. He is also a Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional, a licensed pesticide applicator, a licensed pesticide business, a licensed NJ Home improvement Contractor, certified by the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute, certified Allen Block installer and has served on many local boards and associations in the community. Patrick is also the president of a Transportation/Occupation safety consulting company called Risk Prevention Consultants. Contact him at info@classiclandscaping.net