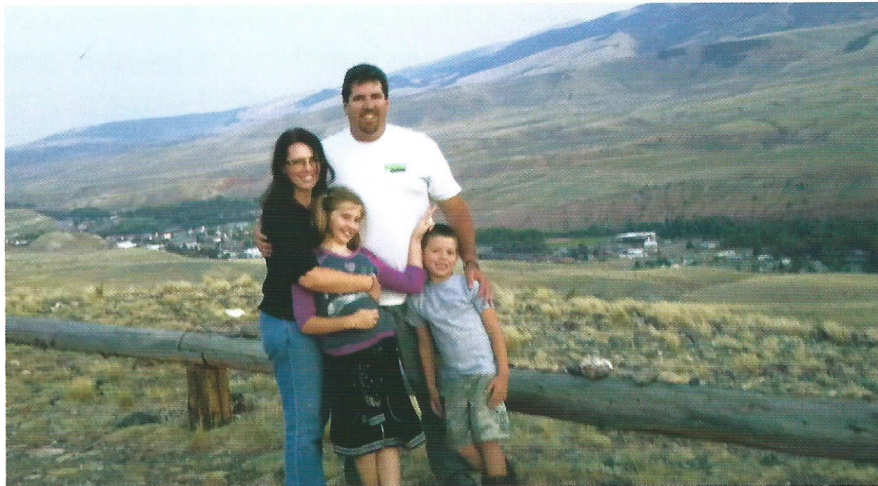


## Five Minutes with Carl Meyers, Appalachian Naturescapes, Inc.



Carl Meyers and wife Stephanie with their children Abby and Will.



Work in progress. Those boulders the crew is placing weigh 10-11 tons each.



**Appalachian Naturescapes, Inc.**  
Morganton, NC

**Owners**

Carl P. Meyers Jr., and Terrel W. Knutson

**Services**

Custom landscaping

**Years in Business**

20

**Employees**

15-20

**Annual Revenue**

\$1.5 – 3 million

**Appalachian Naturescapes joined NCNLA four years ago because they wanted to get more involved in the industry. Right away they started networking with industry peers and attending NCNLA events, such as Green & Growin'. In 2014, they made waves by becoming a double winner of the Excellence in the Landscape Awards (EILA). We recently spent some time talking with founder and co-owner, Carl Meyers.**

**What led you to a career in the green industry and to form Appalachian Naturescapes?**

When I was 13 my neighbors built a greenhouse where they grew annuals. I started riding my bike there and working after school and on weekends. I worked there all through junior high, high school and two years at Western Piedmont Community College.

As I learned more and more about plants, I noticed that the local “landscapers” didn’t know very much about the plants that we were selling them, but they all drove new trucks. So, I thought that somebody with a degree in Horticulture from NC State could probably make a good living, so that’s what I did.

After graduating I took a job in Seattle, thinking I would go to the University of Washington and get my masters degree in Landscape Architecture, but I got homesick. So I moved back into my parent’s basement and started this company.

**What are your main responsibilities?**

I’m blessed to have a great business partner, Terrel Knutson, who runs the general operations. We met at

NC State and have been partners for 17 years. My role is mostly design and sales as well as oversight of the office.

I try to schedule a couple of days per week for designing and estimating. Our excellent office staff usually schedules appointments for new clients on Wednesdays. The rest of the week is left for meeting with existing clients. Since I am currently the only person in our company with a license to drive our 18-wheeler, I also do some logistics work moving boulders and equipment.

**Tell us about a typical day.**

Two or three days per week I take our kids, Abby (13) and Will (10), to school. My wife, Stephanie, works two days on/two days off at Baxter Pharma. If Terrel needs anything laid out for an install crew or help with logistics I try to work that in next if I have no meetings scheduled.

Having designated days for specific tasks really makes my week run more efficiently. It’s also easier for our office staff to schedule my time. I also conduct bi-weekly meetings with office staff and operations to make sure that everyone — maintenance, install, the nursery and operations are working together toward company-wide objectives.

**Tell us about your business. What makes it stand out?**

Appalachian Naturescapes designs, installs, and maintains native style mountain landscapes. We use lots of boulders and conifers. We build walls, steps, patios, stream beds — all with boulders. That is our brand. Our market knows our product before they even know it’s



Boulders and conifers feature heavily in the native style mountain landscapes that are Appalachian Naturescapes' signature style.

us. Many times people call and say, "We want what you guys do."

### Describe your biggest challenge.

Landscape contracting is a dynamic profession. Staff, clients, weather, equipment, plants — those are just a few of the constantly changing variables. You can't be complacent. You always have to be ready to evolve and adapt.

### What has been the most rewarding part of your career?

In 2011 we realized that the market around Morganton was almost saturated with our work; and our competition was copying our look. We decided to try to branch out and become a more regional company. To do that, we improved our website; sponsored two seasons of "In the Garden," with Bryce Lane, on PBS; and we joined NCNLA. We also took a booth at the Green & Growin' Marketplace in 2012 and 2013.

It is an awesome feeling to be recognized by our peers. We were pretty confident that our product was beautiful and unique, so we participated in the awards program. Winning twice — over bigger companies serving much larger markets — was the most personally rewarding thing I've ever experienced. NCNLA's awards banquet also is well done, and the G&G Marketplace trade show is first rate.

NCNLA strengthens our network in the horticulture industry and promotes higher levels of professionalism. In Canada, landscape professionals are considered tradesmen like plumbers and electricians. That's where



At this year's Green & Growin' Awards Ceremony, Carl Meyers (left) and Terril Knutson (right) received the 2015 Excellence in the Landscape Distinction Award for their "Julien Residence" installation. NCNLA president Brad Rollins made the presentation.



Last year, the company's "Teeter Residence" submission netted two 2014 Excellence in the Landscape Awards.

we need to be. We have way more overhead than those trades and a lot of our professionals charge about half.

### Do you have any advice for someone trying to start a business or career in North Carolina's Green Industry?

**1. Work for someone else.** Spend just a few years early in your career working for an established business and you'll learn a lot.

**2. Visit other businesses.** Find companies outside of your market that are not in direct competition with you and go learn from them. The green industry has great people who will share a lot of information with you.

**3. Build personal relationships.** Tommy Massey, the owner of Wakefield Nursery and Landscaping, visited our class at NC State 20 years ago and his advice was this: When you have your own business you need three relationships — a banker, an accountant and an attorney — with people you can call or go to see at the drop of a hat whenever you need advice. You can't be just a customer to them and get the best support; invest time in building relationships and it will pay dividends. 🌿

**"We decided to try to become a more regional company. To do that we improved our website... and we joined NCNLA."**

— Carl Meyers, Jr.