

2008 Newsletter



Grass Science - Why Does Grass Need Water?

Grass requires water for photosynthesis. It needs enough to dissolve and absorb nutrients from the soil to manufacture food in the blades. Without sufficient water, photosynthesis stops and the blades begin to lose color.

Plant cells use water to generate turgor pressure. The pressure of cells pressing against each other creates stiffness that allows the plant to stand upright. Low turgor pressure (not enough water) results in wilting.

Just like we sweat, grass uses water to stay cool. About 90% of the water plants absorb evaporates into the air for temperature control. As the temperature rises, grass uses more and more water from the soil to stay cool, and requires more water to stay green.

Turfgrass dormancy (brown turf) is a survival mechanism that allows grass to live up to 5-8 weeks with no irrigation/precipitation without significant thinning upon recovery from dormancy. This would be under ideal conditions of no regular traffic, good soil, moderate temperatures, no shade, minimum thatch, etc. However, survival is affected by species, age, shade, maintenance (low mowing and/or scalping, too much nitrogen fertilizer in spring, not enough in fall), traffic, heat, etc. Optimum survival may not occur on your particular area (courtesy Purdue University).

Weather Review - The Drought of 2007!

Speaking of drought, 2007 was another unusually hot, dry season in our area. The month of May ended up the driest May since 1988 and the warmest May since 1998, accruing on average only 42% of its normal rainfall...Warmer regions saw temperatures in the 90's early on in May, which is usually rare...June was yet another dry month in Indiana...Temperatures also remained exceedingly warm... Some climate divisions during the separate weeks of June received almost no rainfall at all (approx. 3% of regular values)...July was much cooler than normal... Drought conditions worsened, but were inhibited by the lower overall temperatures...August was sweltering all across the state...For August 2007 the state-averaged mean temperature is 77.2°F, or 106% of the normal 72.7°F...(courtesy Purdue University).

Drought Tips

Based on last year, and the years before, hot and dry seems to be the way of the future. Here are some guidelines for maintaining a drought tolerant lawn:

Mow the grass at a height of 3" or higher all season. The higher you mow a grass plant, the deeper the roots. Deeper roots mean a larger reservoir from which to draw water, which helps keep the crown alive during dormancy.

[Get the details: www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/AY-8.pdf](http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/AY-8.pdf)

Water deeply and infrequently. This practice encourages deep root development and prevents problems caused by overwatering. Grass should receive, at a minimum, 1 inch of water per week. If the lawn is dormant, that may not be enough to make it green, but it will keep it alive until conditions are favorable for renewed top growth.

[Get the details: www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay-7.pdf](http://www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/pubs/ay-7.pdf)

Drought causes stress, which can lead to disease. Look for lesions or spots on the blades. Some diseases can wipe out a whole lawn! If found, let us know. We have a natural fungicide that can fix the problem.

Around mid-August begin watering aggressively. After 1-2 weeks living grass will green up. Large brown, thin or bare areas should be seeded to prevent weed intrusion. We offer turf replacement options and will be happy to consult with you!



www.childsplayorganiclawns.com

Order online or by calling Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450.

Show your neighbors that pesticide-free lawns are important for the health of children, families, pets, the environment and the community. Buy a Pesticide-Free Zone lawn sign for \$10 and display in your yard. At eight inches (8") in diameter, the aluminum enameled sign will not rust and will retain its bright colors for years.

Looking for more information on organic lawncare or pesticide issues? Visit our website at www.childsplayorganiclawns.com/customer-service/links.html

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Thank you to all our customers for another great year!

In this issue:

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2008 Lawncare Information Enclosed!



We Moved!

Over the winter we moved to a more central location. Please update your records with our new information:

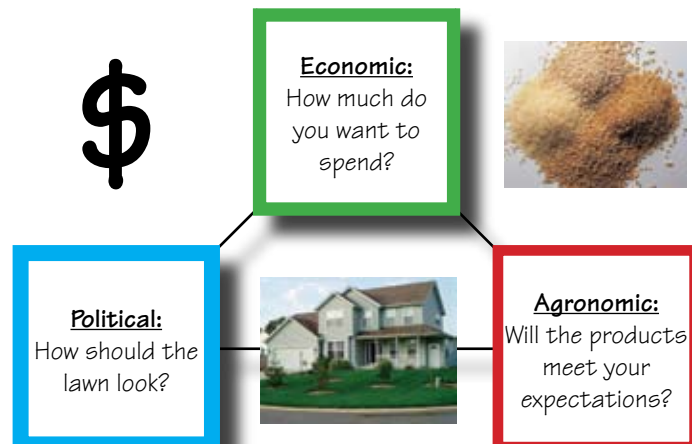
Child's Play Organic Lawns
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www.childsplayorganiclawns.com

Child's Play Organic Lawns Fertilization Programs

Fertilization Program	Steps	Description	Safe / Natural / Organic Content	Uses Chemical Herbicide(s)
Worry Free	6	Our top-shelf program uses natural, safe, organic products. It provides maximum fertilization and soil conditioning with no safety concerns. Expect even, season-long color and improved turf density.	100% - Only non-toxic products are used.	No.
Premium Combo	6	A strong regime for manicured lawns or "grass that needs some help". This program provides excellent fertilization, even, season-long color and improved turf density.	89% - A synthetic source for nitrogen is used.	No.
Silver Combo Plus	5	This popular package maximizes your dollar by emphasizing fall fertilization, when grass is at peak development. Look for good color and better overall presentation.	84% - A synthetic source for nitrogen is used.	No.
Silver Combo	4	A solid program for lower maintenance lawns and customers who take a more basic approach to lawncare.	70% - A synthetic source for nitrogen is used.	No.
Premium Combo - Synthetic	6	This is the Premium Combo with synthetic pre-emergent weed control.	81% - Synthetic sources are used for nitrogen and pre-emergent weed control.	Yes - chemical pre-emergent.
Silver Combo Plus - Synthetic	5	This is the Silver Combo Plus with synthetic pre-emergent weed control.	71% - Synthetic sources are used for nitrogen and pre-emergent weed control.	Yes - chemical pre-emergent.
Silver Combo - Synthetic	4	This is the Silver Combo with synthetic pre-emergent weed control.	40% - Synthetic sources are used for nitrogen and pre-emergent weed control.	Yes - chemical pre-emergent.
Do-It-Yourself	4	Here's a 4 step program you apply yourself using natural, safe, organic fertilizers! It leads to good density, season long color and powerful soil conditioning from organic matter.	100% - Only non-toxic products are used.	No.

Fertilization Programs - Which is Right for You?

Deciding how best to manage a lawn means finding balance between economic, political and agronomic variables. They can be arranged to form a triangle, each element relating to the other:



To pick the best program, take a moment to consider the questions posed above. Decide which variable is most important, then second and third. Compare your answers to the chart above. The colors match the topics for easy reference.

Guidelines to Keep in Mind

6 step programs provide maximum fertilization for general improvement. 5 step programs skip a spring treatment to make them more affordable. 4 step programs will provide adequate nutrition to maintain most lawns. Customers should not expect a 4 step program to provide rehabilitation of a neglected lawn.

Any lawn is subject to weed intrusion if not maintained properly. Synthetic herbicides mask the problem by removing the symptoms. We will help you create an optimal growing environment to maximize the health and development of your grass. A properly maintained lawn can have up to 20% weed intrusion and still appear weed free at normal viewing distances.

"The best weed control method available to turfgrass managers is to promote a dense, healthy stand of the desired turfgrass...The best defense against weeds is dense, healthy turf."
 Category 3b Turf Pest Control; Indiana Commercial Pesticide Applicator Training Manual, Rev 1/03, pg 55-57

Customer Focused Research - What Matters to You?

Three years ago we worked with the MBA program at Notre Dame to better understand how our customers value organic lawncare. This year (2007) we followed up with two customer focused surveys. We'd like to share some important results:

Organic lawncare does a good job for people who value absolute safety over a 100% weed free lawn. For organic lawncare to be more widely acceptable it needs to offer better control of perennial weeds. A majority of respondents would accept limited use of herbicides for spot weed treatment.

Organic lawncare is a good value for those who don't consider chemical or synthetic programs an option. Prices must be reduced to make safer, more organic offerings attractive to a wider segment of lawncare customers.

Ecological concerns were given as the most important reason for going organic, followed closely by safety for children and pets. As long as the products work and are safe, little concern was expressed for what materials are used to make them.

New Products Mean Lower Prices!

The message was pretty clear: prices have to come down and weed control needs to be more immediate. In response we are making significant changes that will allow us to lower fertilization prices by an average of 16%!

In 2008 we will standardize on fertilizers from Nutrients Plus. Customers are encouraged to visit their website at www.nutrientsplus.com. The products are made from a traditional nitrogen source bound to organic biosolids. The result is a safe, environmentally responsible, organic based fertilizer that costs less than meal based fertilizers.

Pre-emergent weed control is important for the prevention of crabgrass and other annual weeds. Corn gluten is typically used for natural pre-emergent weed control. Economically, E85 production has created a corn shortage, while the weak U.S. Dollar has caused international markets to buy food commodities. The combination has driven corn prices to historic highs, spiking the cost of corn gluten.

We will continue to offer corn gluten in our programs and, as a cost reduction measure, we will also offer chemical pre-emergent. It should not be considered 100% safe. However, it has an extremely low toxicity, is used sparingly, and has a very low incident of runoff/leaching in the soil.

New Services / Treatments

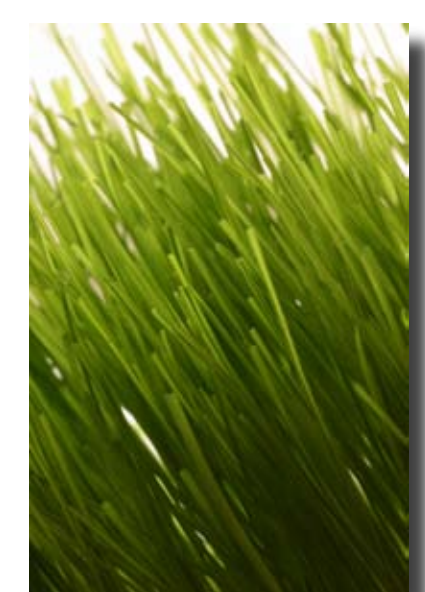
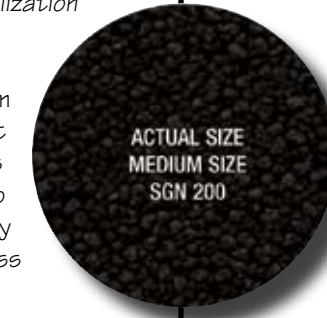
But wait! There's more! In addition to changing fertilizers, we're adding a host of new individual services!

Spot Weed Treatment!

Overwhelmingly customers asked for better weed control. Unfortunately there is no safe, natural weed control that will not harm grass. As a customer satisfaction measure we will offer spot weed treatment using selective chemical herbicides. THEIR USE IS NOT STANDARD IN ANY PROGRAM, and will only be used upon customer request.

Insect/Disease Control!

Insects and disease can do a lot of damage to a lawn. We have a new product made from Neem oil that prevents them both! If you do have an infestation we can correct it better than ever!



Turf Repair!

Summer and winter are cruel to your lawn. Over the seasons we've seen various situations where small areas need to be repaired, but full aeration and overseeding is too expensive. With our new spot repair offering, we will rake out the dead area, spread compost, reseed and fertilize. Just add water!

Organic Top Dressing!

Top dressing is great for improving soil conditions, but traditionally had to be done with tons of material, shovels, rakes and LOTS of labor. Now we have pelletized humus! It provides all the benefits of top dressing and is spreadable like fertilizer. Combine an aeration, overseed and top dressing for a dramatic face lift!



Have questions? We're happy to help. Just call 574.277.LAWN for advice and input!