

The Green Guardian Program

We are the Mid-West's oldest organic lawn care company, in business for over 22 years, and based right here in St Paul. Our system is based on a simple premise: strong healthy grass is your best defense against weeds. We bill ourselves as “edible organic”, everything we put on your yard is made from food-grade farm crop extracts, and you can quite literally eat it.

Let me tell you what we do and how we work... we break lawn care into three areas; infrastructure work, weed control, and, most importantly, fertilization. Most lawns are simply under-nourished, and as you start feeding the turf, it will start to take over your yard and compete better with the weeds.

Your part in this is two simple things... first, set your mower up to leave 3 inches of grass and NEVER cut it shorter during the summer. In the fall for the last two cuttings you will lower about 1”

A healthy grass plant at 1 inch will have about 3 inches of roots, a healthy 3 inch plant will have 8-12 inches of roots, for a much stronger plant. The difference in percentage of photosynthesis between healthy 1 and 3 inch grass plants is over 5000 %, for a much, much healthier plant. When your grass is at 3 inches it will shade and cool the soil 20-25 degrees below the temperature of the air above the grass. And next August when it's 95, if you can keep that soil temp down, it will hold the weed population down.

Second, assuming no rain, water 2 times a week. Early morning is best. This will encourage deep roots. Make the morning following an application one of your weekly waterings. Weeds like hot, dry, acidic conditions... grass likes cool and damp and neutral.

The question is; How do you change the conditions?

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure work consists of a core aeration, to loosen the ground so the grass roots can push out. Soil compacts over time, especially in a city setting, and can get as hard as a rock. Grass roots are thin and wispy; think hair. Weed roots are thick and strong; think bic pens. Loosening up the soil simply makes it easier for the grass to do well.

Soil also becomes acidic over time, acid rain, auto exhaust, neighborhood dogs, even trees and grass build acidity in the soil over time. Applying crushed limestone will help swing that soil chemistry back toward neutral, again favoring your grass. This is especially true for boulevards, where you get the salts and chemicals built up from the streets all winter. If you have an abundance of dandelions or plantains, creeping charlie, moss, toadstools, mushrooms... your lawn is most likely too acidic and needs limestone.

The next step is overseeding... grass is a seed crop, we just don't think about it that way because we keep the top cut off. But that grass crop gets old, and needs new blood to invigorate it. We use only premium seed (which means no weed seeds), and it's a mix of Bluegrass, fescue and 2 different types of perennial ryes. This gives you a nice even finish to your yard, and if you have an area where the bluegrass just won't grow, the fescue and ryes will fill it in.

A lawn is law of the jungle on a quarter acre scale.... one species will dominate the resources, everything else will be left to live on the fringes. We want to establish conditions that will favor the grass.

Infrastructure jobs are best done in the fall, and need to be done on a regular basis, on a schedule dictated by the conditions on YOUR lawn.

FERTILIZER

Everything we use breaks down to organic nutrients and contains a broad spectrum of macro and micro nutrients. Chemical fertilizers usually contains just Nitrogen and Potash with the occasional micro nutrient package but that is more rare than common as these are generally expensive.

Our fertilizer provides a nice rich green color. How we best describe our products is a liquefied super-mulch, rich in nitrogen and potassium and potash... all the little trace minerals that make up a healthy lawn. Most lawns have been underfed for years (if not decades) and will take time to heal. A starving man needs more than 1 steak dinner to get healthy (no matter how good the steak is). It's the difference between a fast food diet and a balanced meal.

WEEDBUSTER

Birds fly, winds blow, weeds will always try to get into your yard, but if the lawn is thick and healthy enough it will fight them off. Weeds and grass plants both do the majority of their growing in May and June, storing energy, getting big and strong to survive the heat of summer and get to fall to seed (weeds don't have much of a life). Between mid-May and mid-June

We provide 3 applications (depending on the temperature) about 7 – 14 days apart. When we spray, we spray straight down into the ground. Grass grows straight up, so the spray blows past, into the soil, and fertilizes. Broad leaf weeds have leaves that lay flat on the ground, so we soak the leaf down. The citrus oil in the solution will irritate the stomata (the little hole the plant breaths through) and it closes, then the sugar beet molasses seals off the leaf face.

When dry, it's like a shellac that seals the plant shut, and by spraying 3 weeks running, we keep it shut for a month and rupture the cells in the weeds leaf. Part of this process stops the plant from doing what is known as transpiration... a nice way of saying 'passing gas'.

We then overfeed it, give it gas it can't get rid of until it literally starts rupturing cell walls in the plant leaf. Understand, we're not trying to kill all the weeds, we can't (at least, not without a boatload of chemicals), but when they're used to getting big and strong and healthy, we are going to do everything we can to hurt it. And while the grass can use it the most, we'll feed it and feed it and feed it some more.

CREEPING CHARLIE

For creeping charlie, during the 3rd application, we will treat all the areas infested with EMG (everything must go, our organic version of Roundup), re-lime and overseed those areas. Keep the areas watered and moist so the new grass seed will germinate, and at the end of a month's time, where you had a healthy patch of creeping charlie, you will have a diminished weed plant and a new crop of grass to pressure it. Understand, we will not kill 100% of all the weeds... nothing short of a large volume of chemicals will, and thats not even a sure thing. What we can do is, at the time that weed is trying to get big and strong and healthy, we'll do everything we can to hurt it and slow it down and stunt it. And when the grass can use it the most, we'll feed it and feed it and feed it some more.

Worry Free plan; it takes care of all 3 areas of lawn care... we'd start with an application in mid- April, this does 2 things... it acts as a pre-emergent on the broad leaf weeds, slowing them down, while giving

the grass a good feeding. About mid-May we would do a (W/B or C/C) weed program and lime. Again, hurt the weeds and feed the grass. Let the lawn set from mid-June to mid-July, then give it a good feeding before the heat rolls in for the summer. Grass quits growing once the temperature gets up (it doesn't necessarily go dormant, just quits growing), so keep it watered and hydrated during the heat. When the heat breaks for the fall, give your lawn good feedings in September and October, to heal from the stress caused by the heat and get strong again before it goes to bed for the winter. We'll follow up that final feeding with a core aeration and an overseeding. And when your lawn wakes up for next spring, you'll have a stronger, healthier lawn than you had this year.

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Mowing the lawn too short. I call this the Masters Syndrome. People watch golf on tv, see the grass cut to ½ an inch and green and not a weed in sight, and decide they want theirs like that. Augusta National is closed 6 months of the year, and the Club spends MILLIONS of dollars to make it look good on TV for 4 days. But there they'll be, in July or August, chopping the grass short. You should NEVER cut more than 1/3 of the plant leaf in a single mowing (it will send the plant into shock, and it will go dormant), the soil temp will shoot from the 70's up to 90 in less than 24 hours, the grass will go dormant and the weeds will have a party until the heat breaks for the season. Then and only then can you start repairing the damage. And if you cut too much off the plant, you can kill your entire lawn.
2. Under watering. Plain and simple. If it's 95 and hasn't rained in 6 weeks, and you're not watering at least twice a week for 45 minutes at a shot, your grass has no chance. And don't water every day for 10 minutes, it's not the same thing. The water will only soak down an inch or so, the grass roots will concentrate there, and the first time you forget to water, the roots will dry out, the plant will go dormant, and the weeds will party like it's 1999. When the heat breaks for the season, you'll be left trying to repair the damage. (Notes on Watering) Always water out of the heat of the day, preferably early (4-7 am) morning, late evening works but can cause fungus. Water droplets on the plant leaves are a million tiny magnifying glasses on a hot, sunny day, and you can burn out a lawn in a single afternoon. Application in the rain is not a problem if under a 4 inch total in the 24 hours following spray. Make the morning following an application one of your two weekly feedings.
3. Cheap seed. Cheap grass seed is cheap because it has a lot of weeds in it. We use only premium seed, a blend of Bluegrass, Fescue and 2 different perennial Ryegrasses. Most lawns are patchwork... someone threw seed there 40 years ago, and someone threw seed here 20 years ago, and none of it's doing well. Our blend will give a nice even finish to the lawn, and assure good coverage.
4. Ignoring the infrastructure. A good grass crop depends in large part on having the right conditions in your yard, and that's in large part infrastructure. Ideally, we will get you on a regular rotation of fall infrastructure work to assure a beautiful, healthy lawn for years to come.
5. Unrealistic expectations. If you want Augusta National for a lawn, you're setting yourself up for disappointment. But thick, healthy grass that's safe for your family and the environment is achievable, just follow a few simple rules. Don't cut the grass short, do water regularly, keep up on your infrastructure, and give it nutrition

A NOTE ON BLVDs.

Blvds are little islands of soil in a sea of concrete and asphalt. Its' soil is usually severely acidic, and the soil temperatures are almost always too high for grass to do well. If you want grass to grow here, it will be necessary to lime well each spring and water more often than you will the rest of your yard.

Keep the grass at 3 inches and be patient.

ON DOGS...

Dog owners are familiar with the problem of the spotted yard. Dog urine, especially females, is extremely acidic, and as dogs like to mark their territory in the same spots, the soil there will soon become too acidic for grass to grow. Get yourself a bag of lime and a scoop, and throw some on the spot every few weeks to pull the soil chemistry back toward neutral. Also, one of our ingredients is sugar beet molasses. It is very sweet and very sticky, and dogs (and some small children) like to roll around in it and then lick themselves for days, transferring it to sofas and chairs. Keep off the lawn for appx. ½ hour after applications, it will dry and they will never know it's there.

IF YOU'VE BEEN USING CHEMICALS ON YOUR LAWN..

Grass plants that are fed a chemical diet over any length of time tend to become 'addicted' to the chemicals, and when you take those away, your grass will not like it. Like any junkie deprived of his drugs, your lawn will have to detox. The only things that will speed this process are to get your grass to 3 inches, water it well to keep it hydrated, give it healthy nutrition, and be patient.