

# 2023 Late Spring Newsletter



In this newsletter we will discuss: insects, weeds, drought stress, shady lawns, expectations & Lawn Doctor reviews.

## Insect Issues?



Having issues with insects in your yard? Insects like ants, chinch bugs, and grubs can cause issues in your lawn, while others like mosquitoes and ticks can keep you from enjoying your yard. Insect pressure this year could be a higher concern again because we had a mild winter, so more of them survived. Many customers do not realize that we also offer insect control programs, if you have any questions about any of these programs please contact our office.

- **Grub Prevention:** A granular insect control product is applied in the summer to control the white grub worms that will feast on the roots of your grass, potentially destroying part or even all of your lawn.
- **Yard Armour Mosquito Control:** Our 6-service mosquito control program is designed to reduce mosquito pressure so you can enjoy your yard. Services are 2.5-3 weeks apart to keep up with the breeding cycle of mosquitoes and can be scheduled around special outdoor events.
- **Yard Armour Flea, Tick & Ant Control:** This 3-service program is completed at the same time as your regular lawn care services and helps keep your family and your pets safe from these harmful insects.
- **Pest Perimeter:** This 3-service program targets specific creepy crawly insects on the exterior of your home, keeping them out of your house allowing you to enjoy your backyard.

## Weed (Mis)identification

### COARSE FESCUE

In the spring, we invariably get many phone calls in March, through April and into May from customers telling us that they have crabgrass in the lawn. In the 20 plus years we have been in business, we have never seen



crabgrass in March or even most of May because the soil temperatures are not warm enough for crabgrass to start germinating.



What the majority of our customers are seeing is another unsightly type of grass called coarse fescue. (Please reference pictures, the top three pictures are coarse fescue, the bottom picture is crabgrass.) Coarse Fescue grows in a clump, grows faster than the rest of your lawn, but is a type of grass, just an undesirable one. Coarse fescue (along with quack grass) are most commonly mistaken for crabgrass, BUT coarse fescue and quack grass are perennials and stay from year to year, while crabgrass is an annual. We are seeing much more quackgrass this spring. (Interestingly, quackgrass can be spread by ducks and geese who eat the seed heads and then "spread" the "pre-fertilized" seed in lawns as they fly over.)



Crabgrass actually isn't a grass, it is a sedge, if you want to read about the difference between grasses and sedges [Click here](#). If you do have coarse fescue in the lawn, we do have a separate program for that, it is not included in our regular weed control program. Please call the office for more details.



## GRASS GOING TO SEED

Are you seeing what looks like little stalks of wheat in your yard? Don't worry, it is not a farmer trying to take over your yard or a weed, it is just your grass "going to seed." It happens every year in May/June as your grass plants are trying to reproduce. Our weed control will have no effect on this (if it did, it would kill off your lawn) so just



continue to mow over these little wheat imposters and they will eventually go away.



## TREE SAPLINGS

These maple tree seedlings are quite common, but we are also seeing large amounts of flowering pear and flowering crabapple tree saplings. Weed killer is not very effective at limiting these. Typically after 2-3 mowings most of the saplings will just die off.

## Weed Identification

### Creeping Charlie

Creeping Charlie is a weed that we can eliminate from your lawn. It was brought to North America in the 17th century as a ground cover, but eventually spread into our lawns. It is part of the "mint" family and if you have ever hand pulled it, you may notice its strong herbal smell. It is considered an invasive species in many states, but the good news is that with consistent treatments it can be eliminated from a yard in a few years. Most Creeping Charlie spreads into thin areas in the shade, but it can survive quite well in direct sunlight.

\*Scalloped edge leaves, purple flowers



### Wild Violet

I love this weed. Like Creeping Charlie, Wild Violet appears to have traveled from Europe as a ground cover and has invaded our lawns. It also has a cult following in the gardening world as a "**medicinal weed**." Interestingly, it is harvested at a commercial scale for its flower which you may find on your dinner plate as a garnish on a fine salad. The leaves can be brewed in tea to help you sleep and I have seen tonics made with Wild Violet Apple Cider Vinegar. (**Please Note:** I strongly discourage you from eating or smoking any flowers out of your lawn) We do eliminate this from lawns and it is one of the hardest weeds we battle. It is not uncommon to take 2 full years to eliminate this from lawns.



\*Heart-shaped leaves, purple flowers

**On that note:** If you have a teenage son or daughter that takes a real interest in growing stuff in the lawn or landscape, be sure to "get involved," and be there to learn with them. We have had a customer who was unaware of what their son was doing, grow quite an impressive..."weed" that "smelled like a skunk" in their landscape. We all got a laugh out of it but local police found it less impressive.



## Yellow Nutsedge

Yellow Nutsedge is very aggressive and can take years to eradicate from a lawn. It is also called "water grass" or "nutgrass" because it thrives in very wet areas of lawns, and in the ground they have little nodules that sort of look like nuts which is how it can spread. Technically, the nutlets or tubers, along with rhizomes which are underground stems survive in the soil from year to year.

Treating small patches in a lawn is included in your lawn care program. For a large infestation in your lawn, there may be an upcharge. Chemical control with herbicides works quite well, but only in soils that are well drained. If the soil in a particular area is always wet, nutsedge control may not be possible long term.

\*Light green/yellowish color, grows faster than rest of turf



## Chickweed

Chickweed can be somewhat of a "canary in the coalmine" weed as it can indicate issues that are not optimal for turfgrass growth. It thrives in compacted soils that are constantly moist or have poor drainage, and in shady areas. As we know for most weeds, anywhere your grass is not healthy and thriving is where weeds will have the opportunity to invade.

\*Oval/egg-shaped leaves, sometimes white flowers that can look like tiny daisies

## Pick a Weed, Any Weed!

Here we have Coarse Fescue, Creeping Charlie and two large patches of mushroom all in a 1 sq ft area. Yes, this part of the lawn needs some help! Just wanted to make sure you were all paying attention! **Note:** Mushrooms are NOT a "weed" that we can get rid of in a lawn, your best bet is to kick or mow it over and it will go away when the area dries out. Mushrooms are a sign of a healthy lawn. We do recommend an aeration when mushrooms are present.



## More Weed Wisdom

A few more tips on our weed control:

- It can take up to **2 weeks** for our weed control product to start working, depending on weather conditions, what kind of weed it is, etc.
- Weeds that are dying will start wilting, curling up, turning colors other than green (brown/yellow/white depending on what kind of weed)
- The dead weeds will NOT just

disappear or disintegrate; we kill weeds, we do not dig them out

- We do **NOT** have a product that prevents most weeds in a lawn, we spray what weeds are there the day we service but the **ONLY** and **BEST** way to prevent most weeds in a lawn is by having a thick, healthy lawn that crowds them out.
- **Why do I get weeds along my edges?** The grass along your driveway and sidewalks and landscape edges is the weakest area in a lot of lawns. Many times these areas are being trimmed too short and the grass is suffering because of it, allowing weeds to invade. We recommend that edges be trimmed to the same length as your grass, 3.5-4 inches, not short like the grass shown in the picture!



Weeds curling and changing colors indicates they are dying



This grass is trimmed so short along the edges that it does not even cover a fingertip!

## Jerry's Corner: Why don't grass grow here?

We get this question quite often. Full disclosure, my entire career is to cheat nature. Yep, I know it sounds nuts but hear me out as I rant. Customers want to grow the perfect lawn that is: unnaturally thick, unnaturally green, unnaturally weed free, that looks exactly the same whether the lawn is flat or sloped, sunny or shady, rock hard clay or pure sand, poorly drained or on the top of a hill, with or without irrigation, over tree roots with pets peeing on it.

The reality is that there is quite a bit that we need to look at when growing a lawn. While fertilizing the lawn and keeping weeds out is very important to getting a thick full lawn, there are so many more things we have to acknowledge when we are considering turfgrass. Environment, cultural practices, plant type, and fertilization are all part of the mix.



The environmental concerns we most focus on are: the amount of sunlight, slope of the lawn, soil type, and proper drainage. If we do not get enough direct sunlight our sun loving grasses just struggle. If the lawn has a very steep slope, water and nutrients just run down the hill and this is amplified if the



soil is clay. Sandy soils dry out faster and can have wild pH swings annually, whereas clay lawns tend to be more alkaline (lawns like to be a bit acidic) and hold water more. If the lawn has an area that holds water, most of our turfgrass plants struggle by being “too wet.” Most of these things are inherited when we buy the property. Cutting down trees (which I personally hate) or putting in drain tiles to move water can be expensive or really change how the property looks and feels.

Cultural issues are the ones that you, the homeowner, are most in control of in your lawn. They include mowing at 3-3.5 inches, mulching your clippings every time you mow, minimizing any trampling damage (including pet activity), and keeping the lawn hydrated. Each lawn needs a different watering plan, using a \$5.00 moisture meter can save you hours of over and underwatering. A shady lawn may require less water, until the trees really start to suck the ground dry. Clay lawns rarely need to be watered more

than twice per week, but sandy lawns may need more frequent waterings.

We also have issues with plant types. I hate to bust anyone’s bubble here, but there is NO turfgrass variety that is labeled for our northern climate that grows great in the shade. If you see a bag of seed that says its shade loving turfgrass, it is marketing baloney. There are grass types that will limp along in the shade, but they are hardly a “turfgrass.” In my opinion, a turfgrass is something you should be able to walk on, maybe have dogs run on, and it won’t die off with moderate traffic. In the shade mixes, none of these grasses hold up, we have tried them all. Most bluegrass plants (which is what is most rolls of sod are made of) do not do very well on very sandy soils or in shady conditions. Using a bluegrass sod in our area is generally a bad idea, turf-type tall fescue is a far better sand tolerant plant. Bluegrass generally does great on good clay topsoil, as long as it is good topsoil, and bluegrass loves lots of sunlight.

Evaluating your soil is quite easy and hard at the same time. Most people look at their soil and say “sandy” or “clay” but even I cannot look at a soil and say the pH is high or low, or that the potassium is at the correct levels. That would be a fun superpower though. The only way we can know for sure is with soil testing and we encourage it every 3-5 years on all lawns. Homeowners can get a free test through the Purdue University extension office.

We are huge fans of growing great thick, weed free lawns where we can. We are also big fans of NOT growing grass in areas we shouldn’t. There are just some areas that nature is saying NO! and as hard as we try to cheat, mother nature usually wins.

### **What options do I have for shady areas?**

There are a few options to manage shady areas:

- Remove trees (usually not a great option for most homeowners). If you do remove trees, you may have new problems. At that point, you may have shady grass in a full sun area, and this can have additional challenges.
- Prune the trees (at the appropriate times) to raise the canopy and get more sunlight to the turf. This may not eliminate the shade issue but may give greater longevity to the shade grass.
- Yearly seeding (or perhaps every other year with heavy shade grass varieties and more

- sunlight). The expectation with yearly spring seeding will be:
1. Seeding with appropriate heavy shade grass seed in the spring when the weather is appropriate (generally late April or May.) Fall seeding in heavy shade poses a problem because the leaf cover will not allow sufficient sunlight in most cases for germination AND the falling leaves can smother new seedlings.
  2. Avoiding pre-emergent in the spring (prevents seed germination)
  3. Watering 2x/day for about 6 weeks once the soil temperatures are above 55 degrees (usually in May)
  4. Seeing grass establish most years by June. The shady grass will be thinner and more shallowly rooted than sunny grass. It is important to baby it- mowing high, no zero-turn mowers, no mechanical core aeration. The seed germination window for this spring seeding is tight. If you don't get great germination between the time that the soil warms up and the time that the trees leaf out, your "window of opportunity" for that year is over. No matter how many times you reseed in the summer, you will not see much germination without adequate sun to the soil.
  5. By August/September, you will see the grass thinning. Many times, it will be bare by fall and/or spring thaw.
    - Sod is not a great option- Sod is grown for sun and there are no true "shade sod" varieties, so sodding would be 2-3 times the cost of seed and would also fail by fall.
    - Replace the grass with something else. There are ground cover and other replacement options if you are not married to the idea of grass.

## NEW! Tip-A-Tech

We are always trying to find ways to give our amazing employees the recognition they deserve. There is a new option to do just that, but we need help from you, our awesome customers! We are introducing a new program this year called Tip-A-Tech. As a small local business, reviews are a lifeline for us and can make or break a company. Here is how the program works:



- If you have a great experience with one of our employees (I know it's called Tip-A-Tech, but it can be any employee), go to our Google review site (link below).
- Write a good review and **mention the employee's name** (this is very important so we know who to tip!)
- That employee will get \$10 as a bonus on their next paycheck.
- That's it! This will cost you nothing except a few minutes to write a review on our business page.

**[Click here](#)** to get started!

(Left to Right - Peter, Rob, Mike, Josh, Jacob R, Jerry, Jacob S "Spiegs")

## Service Expectations

### SPRING EXPECTATIONS

**In the SPRING, at our Fertilization & Weed control visits,**

- **You CAN expect us to Apply a granular "pre-emergent" to prevent crabgrass seed germination** (Except in cases where you are receiving power seeding, the pre-emergent

prevents seed germination). Crabgrass is best prevented with this method, since treating crabgrass once the seeds “sprout” or germinate is much more difficult

- **You CAN expect us to Apply granular fertilizer to provide the nutrients that the grass plants need to grow.** We will use a slow release fertilizer that is used well by the plants, with low risk of “burning” and low risk of soil and water table “run off.”
- **You CAN expect us to Apply liquid weed control to all broad-leaf weeds visible at the time of our visit.** We will expect any weeds present to curl and brown within 7-10 days of treatment.
- **You CAN expect us to Evaluate the turf conditions & to offer feedback on care practices.** We will give you feedback on concerns, as appropriate, in our after service email.
- **You CAN expect us to Do our best to have the SAME technician** to service your property through the year.
- **You CANNOT expect Prevention of broadleaf weeds with weed treatments alone!** Weed spray is not preventative. Broadleaf weeds, like dandelions, clover, creeping Charlie, thistle, etc come up primarily from roots and runners. If weeds are NOT PRESENT, weed spray will not be effective. The only PREVENTION of these weeds is a thick, healthy lawn that chokes them out. Creating a thick, healthy lawn takes time. In most cases, it can take up to 2 years of consistent treatments WITH good care practices to see a lawn become virtually “weed-free.” You WILL need to do your part in this.
- **You CANNOT expect To see good results when care practices are not optimal.** We know that mowing and watering are 2/3 of the care needed for a healthy lawn. (Our treatments are only 1/3). If mowing is too short, we will expect to see more disease, insect damage, die-back of turf, bare/thin areas and 25-50% more weeds. Turf needs 1 inch of water PER WEEK to stay green. If conditions are dry, turf will go brown and grass will go dormant. If dry conditions exist for longer than 3-4 weeks, areas of turf will begin to die. You can read more about proper watering and mowing in our past news letters or always feel free to call or text our office.
- **You CANNOT expect To “CURE” shady lawns with fertilizer alone.** Areas of the grass that get less than 4-5 hours of DIRECT sunlight in summer will NOT sustain grass well from year to year. Most shady lawns will need routine seeding to sustain grass. This can be a lot of work for only a short window of thin grass.
- **We WILL NOT “Upsell” you things you don’t need.** We will be honest about what your lawn needs- whether you do it yourself or have us do it, but we will not try to add services just to “increase your customer value.” This is important to us.

**We WILL NOT Do additional services like seeding, fungicide, insecticide, etc without you asking us.** We will let you know about concerns and make recommendations, but we want you to feel in control of your lawn and never feel pressured to add service.

[Click here](#) for a a complete guide on Service Expectations.

**SERVICES CONTINUE FROM SEASON TO SEASON. FOR A CHANGE IN SERVICE PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE.**

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