

THE TURF TIMES



Welcome to our newsletter.

Our goal is to provide accurate, researched information to develop and maintain your ideal lawn.

Each issue contains an article written by Blue Grass staff, as well as information from university researchers and tips from area experts. **This issue contains information on crabgrass prevention, powdery mildew identification, and our new BGE Mythbusters edition!**

Feel free to contact us with questions or suggestions at any time. 319-842-2165 or sarah@bgsod.com

Know someone who should subscribe? Have them do so here: <http://www.bgsod.com/new-index/#newsletters-1>

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Hate Weeds? It's time to stop them from germinating.

Crabgrass/Weed Prevention

It's time for the second step of our 4-Step program: 20-0-5 with

Dimension. This application has two benefits for the lawn: a slow-release fertilizer that will feed your lawn for approximately 60 days and prevent weeds for 120 days. One interesting fact about this product is that it prevents more than just crabgrass germination. Our Step 2 will prevent germination for 39 types of common lowa weeds such as goosegrass, foxtail, annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), brome, chickweed, knotweed, wild mustard, purslane, and shepherdspurse. Please note that it will also stop regular grass seed from germinating as well. So save your seed money!



Blue Grass Staff Pro Tips:

If you have had problems with crabgrass or other weeds in the past, you can consider doing two applications of Step 2. One now and the second in late August, early September, to encourage full season control.

There's a fungus among us...

Powdery Mildew Has Arrived!

Have you noticed an area of your lawn that looks like it has been sprinkled in powdered sugar? You've got Powdery Mildew! In terms of fungi, Powdery Mildew is relatively harmless fungi that loves cool soil temps and humid air. This fungus thrives in areas with poor drainage, poor sunlight access, and poor air circulation in the area. This means that the way to improve it is to improve all three of those variables. For example, you could trim back any trees or shrubs that are inhibiting light and air flow, as well as aerate the area.



Could you put down a fungicide to clear this up? Yes. However, at Blue Grass we tend to advise that a fungicide should be a last resort because it kills both the good bacteria and the bad. Improve controllable variables (drainage, sun and air flow issues) before pulling out the big guns (a fungicide). In short, we like treating the problem and not just the symptom.

For more information read this helpful article from the University of Minnesota: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/lawns/powdery-mildew-in-the-home-lawn/>

Step 3: Grub Control

Grub season is coming! Apply Step 3 of our four-step program anytime in June or July. In fact, we have already received phone calls and photos regarding earlier-than-normal grub activity!



Review Us, Please!

We work hard to help our customers. **Now we need your help to improve our online presence!** The more reviews we have, the higher we appear in search results online. We are on **Facebook**, **Yelp** and **Houzz** for your reviewing pleasure!



Mythbusters: BGE Edition

We love that our customers are inquisitive. Thank you for taking the time to ask us so many thoughtful questions over the years! Recently, we have noticed an influx of questions regarding DIY solutions for various yard projects online. To be honest, some of the ideas sound like they may have some scientific basis, some others sound a bit like “snake oil”, but HEY, how will we know without running some EXPERIMENTS!

The photo on the right is a photo from our first experiment: Back to the (Epsom) Salt Mines



Mythbusters 1: Back to the (Epsom) Salt Mines

Pinterest LOVES to recommend epsom salts for your lawn. Scientifically, there is reason to suspect this might be a good idea because epsom salts are largely made up of magnesium, which is a vital nutrient for plant growth.

We have already set the parameters that in order for a myth to be “confirmed” it has to meet two criteria: 1. It has to be obviously effective and 2. It has to be economical. With those two rules in mind we set up our first experiment.

To run this experiment we wanted a soil test plot we KNEW had a magnesium deficiency because that would be the easiest way to see if there was a positive change from applying the product. Fortunately for us, a local school had just had a soil test done and discovered their grounds are seriously lacking in the magnesium department (pictured below). It was a Mythbusters match made in heaven!

Our first experiment followed the suggested rates from the Pinterest article in question (0.8 oz of epsom salts/gallon). Like true scientists we duplicated the experiment at a half rate and a double rate, just to see what would happen. We also marked out a control plot for comparison. One week later we came back and saw exactly zero change. Bummer!

Not to be dissuaded, we repeated the experiment with rates suggested in an Iowa State turf grass textbook which suggested a rate up to 10x the Pinterest trial.

We ran into our first issue mixing the water and epsom salts. The 8.0 oz of salts made a slurry that was nearly too thick for our sprayer nozzle. Because of this we added a FOURTH test plot where we spread dry epsom salts using a hand spreader.

One week after application we were STUNNED to see no response in the area. We waited another week (which included a nice rain event) to see if there was any change and again, NADA. I’ll admit that we were a little sad to start off our series with a “busted” lawn myth that we had expected would work!

In our (surprised) opinion: This myth is BUSTED.

Truthfully, it MIGHT be possible to improve your lawn with epsom salts, but the necessary rates to see results are cost prohibitive compared to simply finding a bag of magnesium sulfate to correct the deficiency. But as always, go ahead and take this advice with a grain of salt. ;)