

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 tips for spring weed control, dealing with dandelions, and easy DIY ways (and things to avoid) when trying to improve your soil health.

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

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Step 2 - Weed Prevention

Happy Spring (FINALLY)!

It's officially time to apply Step 2 to your lawn.

What does Step 2 do? It is a weed preventer that prevents more than 40 types of grassy and broadleaf weeds that are known to plague Iowa lawns (see photo below for complete list). Of the four steps in our program, this one is the most influenced by weather and soil conditions which is why we try so hard to remind people to apply this ASAP!

Here are some important things to keep in mind regarding Step 2: Most importantly, the weed preventer in Step 2 is active for 120 days (give or take, depending on weather conditions) and it will stop ALL seeds from germinating - including the good stuff you are trying to grow intentionally! This is why you should avoid gardens and landscaping never try to do a seeding project in the same season that you are trying to control weeds. The good news is that Step 2 doesn't affect sod and will even keep weeds from coming up in between seams, so sod projects are still "a go" with Step 2!

Fall Applications	Broadleaf Weeds
Fall application of this product may be followed by an appropriately timed application in the following spring to provide long-term control of crabgrass.	bittercress (Cardamine spp.)
When applied preemergence (prior to germination) for control of crabgrass in the spring, this product will also control or suppress the following weeds at application rates given in the Table 1 above:	chickweed (<i>Stellaria</i> spp.)
Grasses	cuphea, <i>Cuphea</i> (Cuphea carthagenensis)
bluegrass (Poa annua)	gaura, <i>Gaura</i> (Gaura coccinea)
bluegrass, annual (Poa annua)	henbit, <i>Lamium</i> (Lamium amplexicaule)
bluegrass, smooth (<i>Poa annua</i>)	lambquarters, <i>Polygonum</i> (Polygonum aviculare)
crabgrass, smooth (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>)	leopardus, common (<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>)
crabgrass, Southern (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>)	manzanita (<i>Xylosma chrysanthemoides</i>)
creeping bentgrass (<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>)	medic, black (<i>Medicago lupulina</i>)
dallisgrass (sodding) (<i>Paspalum dilatatum</i>)	milkweed, <i>Asclepias</i> (Asclepias speciosa)
dogstraw (<i>Elsholtzia ciliata</i>)	mustard, <i>Brassica</i> (Brassica napus)
fescue, green (<i>Festuca elatior</i>)	oxalis, <i>Oxalis</i> (Oxalis pes-caprae)
foxtail, green (<i>Festuca rubra</i>)	peppergrass (<i>Physaria</i> (Physaria intermedia))
foxtail, red (<i>Festuca rubra</i>)	pigweed, <i>Amaranthus</i> (Amaranthus palmeri)
hairygrass (<i>Pennisetum clandestinum</i>)	purplegout (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)
oats, wild (<i>Avena fatua</i>)	quackgrass, <i>Agropyron</i> (Agropyron repens)
ryegrass (<i>Lolium spp.</i>)	redroot, common (<i>Parietaria difusa</i>)
timothy, <i>Phleum pratense</i>	shepherdspur (<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>)
sandbar (<i>Onchosima</i> spp.)	speedwell, <i>Veronica</i> (Veronica arvensis)
smoothgrass (<i>Sporobolus indicus</i>)	spurge, garden (<i>Euphorbia hirta</i>)
† Suppression only)	spurge, greater (<i>Euphorbia heterophylla</i>)
	spurge, purple (<i>Euphorbia corollata</i>)
	spurred gentian (<i>Gentianella amarella</i>)
	woodward, creeping (<i>Desmodium rotundifolium</i>)
	woodward, yellow (<i>Desmodium strictum</i>)

Are All 13-13-13s the same?

One frequently asked question we have been getting this year is, "Is the 13-13-13 they have at *big box store* the same as yours?"

The short answer is "no". And to demonstrate this, we grabbed a couple bags and did a side-by-side test in our office lawn this spring. Our 13-13-13 is on the left in this photo, theirs is on the right. The two products were applied at the same time and at the correct rates.

So what causes the difference in results? The first major difference is that our 13-13-13 is a hot blend, which means that each granule has every nutrient present. The big box version was a cold blend, so some of the particles were nitrogen, some were potassium, etc. As you can see, they don't give as even of a spread/green-up pattern when you create a product in that style.

Secondly, the quality of a fertilizer can be impacted by the source of the nutrients itself. Some sources are harder for plants to break down and take more time to have a positive effect on the area. Our 13-13-13, for example, was specifically selected because the sources for the nutrients are in forms that are readily available to plants so that you, the end user, sees an immediate benefit from your efforts to feed your plants. Instant food access is also a benefit to the lawn because it helps the lawn to thicken immediately, which in turn reduces weed penetration in the area. It's a win-win!



Do you know a group or a business who might be interested in a private tour of Blue Grass? Have them contact me at sarah@bgsod.com or 319-842-2165 to set up their tour!

Controlling Dandelions

What a great year we are having for dandelions! It seems like every ditch, roadway and lawn I see has a sudden pop of cheerful yellow. However, not everyone loves these little blossoms. Here are some suggestions for controlling those dandy-lions (pictured right).

As always, you have options, depending on your lawn weed tolerance and the level of your infestation.

1. **Do they not bother you very much?** You can just leave them. Dandelions are a good source for early spring food for local pollinators. Or maybe leave them for few weeks until other plants in your landscaping and gardens are really blooming in full splendor to offer other food sources for bees, butterflies and the like.
2. **Do you not mind many but they are getting a little out of hand?** You can spot spray them. Dandelions are typically very easy to kill with spot sprays, so if you don't have a major infestation, this would be the recommendation I would make personally. This way you can continue with your regular 4 Step program without any rearranging of steps and you can control your level of tolerance for the species.
3. **Are they out of control and you are getting stressed out?** You can apply Step 4 (our weed and feed) any time to kill broadleaf weeds. While fall is the best time to control weeds in Iowa, it can be applied any time weeds are actively growing. Remember, Step 4 must be applied to wet grass and then you do *not* want rain for at least 24 hours to ensure that the product sits on the leaves long enough to be effective.

Improving Soil Health

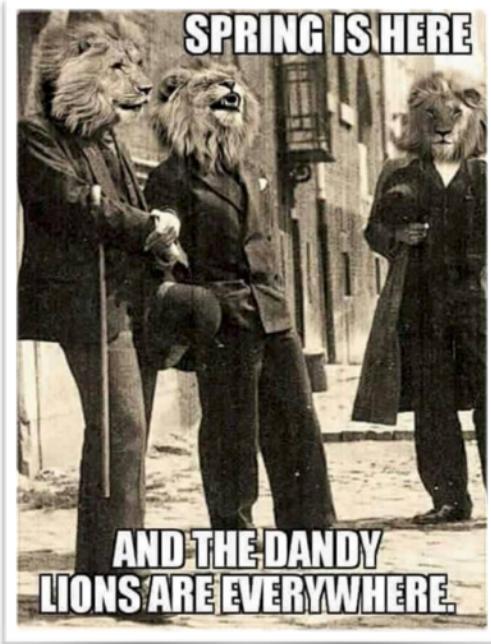
In the past few years, I have received many questions regarding methods for improving soil health - which makes me REALLY happy. As humans, we owe our very existence to the productivity of the soil and its ability to support life, so when people ask how best to care for their land it makes my heart sing.

First and foremost, do a soil sample if you haven't already. The only way we will know that we are giving the plants and soils on your property what they truly need is with a sample.



Secondly, stop bagging your clippings (and stop dethatching) and start scheduling core aerations (the kind that pull the plugs) yearly. These simple practices will help your soil break down clippings quickly and efficiently which will increase organic matter in the soil (which improves moisture holding capacity) and feed your lawn by generating your own lawn compost (much like what is pictured on the left) with those clippings.

Third, don't waste your money or time on "bugs in a jug". There are *billions* of microbes in the soil and the scientific community is just beginning to scratch the surface of what is there and how these creatures interact with each other. What we *do* know is that our soil biosphere is a complex ecosystem that, like a forest, could be affected negatively by the introduction of an invasive species. A better strategy is to care for your soil physically with aeration and correct feedings to promote the healthy species that are already present.



Mythbusters: BGE Edition

Contact us with topics you would like us to explore next season with our 2018 Mythbusters program!

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