



Saturday, May 31, 2014

Who to beLIEve?

Last week I saw something which I consider comedic gold in the lawn care industry. There was a lawn loaded with dandelions that had a Liberal election sign on it, Joe Dickson of Ajax I believe, and the home owner was bent over from the waist with a bottle of Weed B Gon in one hand spraying the hell out of the invasive yellow weeds. If only I could've taken a picture, but sadly, I was driving at the time.

With the election looming I thought it might be a good idea to explore the truths, twisted-truths and lies about the products and practices that encompass your lawn.

One thing I have come to know as the only absolute in the lawn care industry since the ban went into effect...oh so long ago, is you can't believe what anyone says.

I hope in posting this I can perhaps shed a little light on certain cultural practices and products and dispel various myths about lawn care in general as we stand on the battlements trying to hold back the constant invasion of weeds and insects attacking the castle walls.

So...is it true , or is it false?

"Fiesta is a weed killer"- False - but Neudorff wouldn't sell so much Fiesta, nor Scott's Weed-B-Gon if people knew they were buying a control, not a killer. Fiesta kills only the top of the weed, the tap root remains unaffected. As everyone knows- if you don't get the root, you don't get the weed. So don't listen to that silly Scottish sod in the commercial.

Fortunately for these guys these products are the best controls available on the market currently and there's always corporate to hide behind when disgruntled customers come calling.

Facebook Badge

Durham Lawn-Jockey



[Create Your Badge](#)

DURHAM LAWN JOCKEY



The New Breed of Lawn Care/ Serving Durham and the G.T.A.



The only truth here is, any companies claiming they kill weeds are...how should I put this...blatantly twisting the truth to their advantage.

"Nematodes can be applied as soon as the soil temperature reaches 12 Celsius"- True- but in the spring grubs are too big for nematodes to control effectively. You get 30% control, if you're lucky, when applied correctly. I don't care what strain of nematode you are using the results are the same. So, chances are you'll be back in August to buy more. How convenient for the manufacturer.

This year I suspect grubs to be less of a problem due to the harsh winter, so save your money unless you are absolutely sure grubs are the issue.

"Corn Gluten prevents crab grass germination"- True, but only for 6 weeks when applied at 20lbs per 1,000 square feet and watered in to activate. Since you're putting it down in late April, early May, that takes you to about the end of June when the weather really starts to heat up and lo-and-behold you get crabgrass. That was money well spent especially when you are dealing with a commodity that is currently around \$50 a bag. If I were you, I'd raise my mowing height to keep the soil temperature cooler and hold on until Opportune (the next crabgrass control) arrives on the market.

"Sodding is the way to go to repair a lawn"- True and False. If you want an instant fix and gratification, go for it. But be aware:

- 1) Sodding can be very expensive.
- 2) 90% of sod is made up of Kentucky Blue grass. Not really the grass for our climate. It doesn't have a deep root system and rings the dinner bell for insects. Grubs can move fast through KB and who knows, depending on where the rolls of sod are from, they may have already hitched a ride to your property.
- 3) If you don't baby the sod- water, water, water, and commit to an annual regimen of fall over-seeding, 2 years from now you'll probably be back at the same point of having to resod.

"Top soil and seeding is the better way to go"- True, but this course is not without it's pitfalls.

- 1) Choose the best quality seed, or risk putting more weeds back into your lawn. Spend the money. Get endophytic seed that has been tested for weed seeds and contains diverse speices of grasses- fescues and perrenial ryes.
- 2) Get the best screened triple mix, or better yet, use compost and peat moss, or - once again- risk putting more weeds back into your lawn.

"Core aeration must be done on an annual bassis"- True, if you want to do everything you can to contribute to the health of your

The ultimate low maintenance grass seed

Lawn Blogs

- ◆ [The Lawn Jockey's Tips](#)
- ◆ [All About Lawns](#)
- ◆ [Frankie Flowers](#)
- ◆ [The Lawn Blog](#)
- ◆ [The Green View](#)
- ◆ [Pesticide Truths](#)

Blog Archive

▼ 2014 (6)

▼ May (1)

[Who to beLIve?](#)

► April (2)

► March (1)

► January (2)

► 2013 (15)

► 2012 (15)

► 2011 (21)

► 2010 (10)

► 2009 (18)

I recommend these businesses

- ◆ [Durham Handyman](#)
- ◆ [Alex Pol Landscaping](#)
- ◆ [Alex Pol Tree Services](#)
- ◆ [Dave at The Gardener](#)

Followers

lawn. However, I advocate fall aeration is the best way to go and I am trying to convert my customers to this way of thinking. Aerations done in the spring generally lead to an increase of weed cover. There are 200 weed seeds lying dormant per square foot and you've just pulled those cores up and exposed them to favourable elements. Enough said.

"My neighbour doesn't do anything to his grass and it's beautiful"-

False. A lawn doesn't just look immaculate without paying some attention to it. The weed faeries don't show up in the middle of the night and hand pull.

My lawn looks fantastic, yet I don't have time to get out there and work on it daily. To some this would mean I don't work on it at all.

That's not true. I fertilize regularly, I over-seed with endophytic Eco-Lawn grass seed in the fall so I don't have to water it as much. I aerate, (in the fall only to avoid excess weed growth in the spring), I keep my mower on the highest height and I keep on top of the weeds. When I see a weed, I spray it with Fiesta. Yet, if you were to see it up close, there are weeds in my lawn, but from the other side of the street...the grass *is* always greener right?

"If I try to bring back pesticides from the States they'll confiscate it at the border." -False. The border is Federal, the bylaw is

Provincial- honestly, they don't care. They just want the duty if you have to pay it. Why even the bylaw states, "It's not illegal to have the product, just illegal to apply, or sell for ornamental purposes if you are not a golf course, or farmer, or sod grower, or.....

Hey I can be fined heavily for using it but what a customer does on his or her lawn when I'm not there is not my concern. Even the Ministry has told me they have no jurisdiction over what companies can tell their current or potential customer base, so have at it, if that what turns your crank?

Do I know if someone is cheating?....Absolutely...no weeds is a good tip-off...lawns I work on have far reduced weed cover, but no weeds...these days that's unheard of with out a little chemical help from the black market.

So that is the truth as I see it and maybe I've cleared up a few things for you? Unless you don't believe this Blog? Then I have nothing more to say.



Join this site

with Google Friend Connect



Members (4)



Already a member? [Sign in](#)

Posted by Strange at **4:38 AM** **No comments:**

Labels: **Saying this about that**

Sunday, April 20, 2014

Welcome to our world.

With Earth Day just around the corner, I always look for something interesting and insightful to post.

Then I came across this article on Force of Nature's website and thought it might be a good choice with a touch of déjà vu of Earth Day's past.

Seems Manitoba is now going through what the Liberals introduced and eventually brought into law in Ontario.

Opposition to the NDP's plan to outlaw cosmetic lawn-care pesticides appears to be mounting, led by groups who claim the government has snubbed science in favour of a feel-good political hit.

They also say Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh's planned ban of the chemicals has caused needless confusion for lawn-care company customers and appears to be based more on pressure from activist groups than reason. Mackintosh said Friday the province is simply following the lead of other provinces and that any ban — details are to be announced this spring — will be phased in over a one- to two-year period and will be accompanied by a public education campaign on what safer alternatives are available to treat lawn weeds.

"There is a blossoming market of what is called bio-pesticides," Mackintosh said. "Clearly, the market is changing very rapidly. It is no longer a choice between conventional pesticides and a dandelion."

Lobby groups such as the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers say they question how much public support there actually is for such action, spokesman Draper Houston said.

"We're encouraging everybody to think about it from a scientific perspective rather than an emotional response," Houston said. "The scientific evidence backing up the bans just isn't there."

"The pesticides that are in question go through rigorous testing from Health Canada and we want to make sure that that's part of

the decision, which it doesn't seem to be right now."

The push-back against the province's ban came after a poll released last month said 71 per cent of Manitobans supported a law phasing out the use and sale of lawn and garden chemicals. It also said rural, urban and suburban residents agreed (at 86 per cent, 72 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively) that chemical weed killers should be barred from use and sale.

The poll was released by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and Manitoba's Green Action Centre.

Dave Hinton of Weed Man said if the province was truly interested in protecting Manitobans from exposure to chemicals it would also address what people add to their hot tubs and swimming pools or use to preserve their wood decks.

"If these products are dangerous, why is the government allowing us to put them on our food?" Hinton said. "Why are they allowed on our golf courses?"

Hinton also said Health Canada reported in 2008 only 1.6 per cent of non-agriculture pesticides were used on turf grass. He said pesticides used in Canada for non-agriculture purposes are "for water treatment in swimming pools and in wood preservatives. That's where most of it's being used."

"They are pushing this through without any justification. They never specify which pesticides are bad. They just say all pesticides, but we hardly use any."

Mackintosh said health experts, such as the Canadian Cancer Society, say government should focus most on reducing exposure to pesticides where these products are needed least.

"That is where there's been a focus on the cosmetic use of pesticides," he said. "We know that there are alternatives."

Hinton added the province will be hard-pressed to administrate its ban without adding to its bureaucracy.

Nutri Lawn's Brent Kapusta said he's already been treating lawns with natural weed-control product Fiesta for almost three years.

Fiesta is used in other provinces that have already restricted lawn care pesticides.

bruce.owen@freepress.mb.ca

Letter to Conservation and Water Stewardship Minister Gord Mackintosh from the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers

Dear Minister,

A large coalition of Manitoba citizens, organizations and businesses are deeply concerned with both your comments to the Winnipeg Free Press on Feb. 27, 2013, and your seeming determination to implement an Ontario-style pesticide ban across Manitoba. We believe that before you go down this road, you owe Manitobans much more open dialogue and information than you have provided to date.

We have three questions to which we believe Manitobans deserve answers:

1. On Feb. 27 you told the Winnipeg Free Press that, "Just in the last few months we're seeing red flags from the science community on the health impacts, in particularly affecting children." We are not aware of any new peer-reviewed science on this subject. Just what are the new studies to which you refer?

2. Canadians have the ability to request that Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency conduct a Special Review on any product currently approved for use in Canada if issues are identified. Have you provided the data referenced above to Health Canada and requested such a review on any pesticide? If so, what were the results? If not, why have you not done so, given your stated concerns?

3. On Feb. 27 you spoke with approval to the Winnipeg Free Press of a poll of fewer than 500 Manitobans, conducted by an environmental activist group, and inferred that this was justification for moving forward on a pesticide ban. Does your government regard polls of this nature as being appropriate proxies for developing safety policy for Manitobans, or should peer-reviewed science be the deciding factor?

We believe that these questions need to be answered before, not after, your government introduces legislation.

The preservation of green space in Manitoba on both public and private lands deserves at least that much consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Don Pincock, interim president & CEO

Good luck Manitoba, but I'm pretty sure how this story ends. On the bright side, your residents will be traveling more in years to

come...south of the 49th parallel. Just ask any home owner in Ontario with a weed-free lawn...not that they'll admit it.

Happy Earth Day.

Posted by Strange at 3:58 PM No comments:

*Labels: **Bylaw***

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Silent sorrow in empty trucks

Believe me, it's not too often I feel sorry for the big three in the lawn care industry, but as we still wait for the beginning of the 2014 lawn season I can't help but wonder the problems Mother Nature's temper tantrum have caused.

First of all let's do the math; you have a fleet of 40-or-so trucks doing 30 plus applications a day each...that's 1,200 customers, give or take, you will have to pick-up with every day lost.

Seems Steve Stronge who spends much of his time now apologizing to Weedman customers on **Homestars** might have a few additions to that list?

Because it is such a game of numbers with the bigger companies they are usually out no later than the end of March letting the fertilizer fly. With the winter we've had such a thing is not possible even mid-way into April. Now add in the massive clean up from the ice storm. Many properties are still littered with the shrapnel of fallen tree branches.

Do you really want a lawn tech playing hopscotch with a 80lb hopper of fertilizer around all of it? Yet, mark my words, in a day-or-two it is exactly what you'll see.

I've already witnessed Property Stars out aerating lawns as of April 7th. One lawn had a mound of snow and ice on it and they simply aerated around it.

A fool and his money I guess?

Please people! Understand, if your lawn is too soggy, or too frozen, aeration is going to be ineffective and cause more damage than benefit.

I'm not saying this for my own gain, this is aeration 101 if you care to do some research. Most of our aerations are performed in the fall because in spring, I'm just pulling up cores packed with weed-seeds and exposing them to the elements making them ripe for germination.

As a business owner I understand the issues with keeping a

customer base happy when playing catch-up, but as a consumer, when I pay for a service I am trusting someone to do it correctly.

In the new era of "organic only" lawn care, customer service is key. Otherwise, one day there may not be enough lawns for everyone. The big guys should take note: with social media front and foremost, there are only so many suckers out there ripe for the picking.

Posted by Strange at 6:47 AM No comments:

Labels: Lawn care

Sunday, March 23, 2014

Ice, ice, baby

Spring has arrived, although it doesn't look much like it. I tried to do some assessments this week with out much luck due to the white blankets that still cover most lawns.

With most properties now seeing 75 plus days of ice on their turf there is cause for concern. Snow as an insulator is one thing, ice is quite another and can cause serious damage to grass on a cellular level if it remains too long.

Some golf courses had aerators out on the ice in a panic to try and break things up.

Is *your* sky falling yet?

Look, we just went through the worst winter in twenty years and sure, there's ice below the snow and frozen soil beneath that, but we've been through extreme weather before.

The Guelph Turfgrass Institute didn't seemed overly concerned when I read their blog. They noted there was no detectable smell when they chiselled through the ice, but it was still too early to determine the effect of winter hardiness on fescue and perennial rye grasses.

Truth is, until we finally see what the damage is, no one should join

the line of lemmings running periously toward the precipice. Grass is a resilient beast and bare areas can be reseeded, so chill out....no pun intended.

Posted by Strange at 10:54 AM No comments:

*Labels: **Saying this about that***

Friday, January 24, 2014

It's not too cold for cold calling

Are you thinking about your lawn under all that snow and ice? To tell you the truth, neither am I. However, don't be surprised if there's a knock at the door soon- if it hasn't happened already- and you open it to find some doe-eyed, high school student with rosy cheeks and a fluorescent vest, asking you if you'd like a free quote for lawn care.

I don't begrudge someone of the younger generation trying to make a buck. Au contraire, I applaud their fortitude to be out in these temperatures hoofing it from door to door. That's a tough job for little pay.

Perhaps that's part of the initial sell- making you feel sorry for some kid shivering and freezing in the cold trying to make quota?

I am also not trying to tell you who should step foot on your lawn if you want a particular service...there are plenty of lawns out there for everyone...so, whatever turns your crank.

I do however, like to educate those willing to listen. I have worked for the big guys so I speak from experience when I say, I have witnessed the deception and empty promises first-hand. The best advice I can pass along is: be aware of what is involved when you sign on the dotted. Understand what you are getting into before you get into it...or in other words do your homework.

It's quite simple really. A few minutes on the web checking sites like **Homestars**, or the **Better Business Bureau** website can save you a pounding, financial headache somewhere in the not-to-distant future. There are great reviews revolving around both positive and negative experiences with most companies that can help you decide your course of action.

If you don't have access to a computer then ask around. Talk to neighbours and let them weigh in before you decide.

Remember not all companies operate in an underhanded way and with a little investigation you can uncover those who put customers ahead of the cold-call bottom line.

Don't fall victim to a numbers game that many of the bigger

companies play and protect yourself first.

Otherwise your, "yes" to a free quote, may become, "yes" to a quota, where service/billing will begin in late March despite your protest.

Posted by Strange at 9:56 AM No comments:

*Labels: **Saying this about that***

Thursday, January 16, 2014

A lawn time coming

This year's IPM Symposium captured my attention...which is saying quite a lot since past years have seen me nod off repeatedly.

So what was the difference?

The 2014 offering had information I felt was useful. I actually left with a feeling of hope for the lawn care industry.



Yet, the symposium also had a few Debbie Downer moments as well. So, here are the good, bad and ugly of the day in question.

The good:

The news of new bio-pesticides and herbicides either already approved by the PMRA or pending, was plentiful and as long as they perform to their fanfare things are looking up in an otherwise bleak industry.

Although we've heard this before...dare I say Fiesta and *gulp* Sarritor, the *Phoma Macrostoma* that we've waited for, what seems like eons, is finally in production mode as a granular. The spray is still in development and not ready for commercial launch, but hell...I'll take whatever.

I am also told, the product can be applied as a post, or pre-

emergent, does not prevent grass seed growth, and when applied as a pre-emergent it works for the season with 80-100% control of broad leaf weeds. Those are pretty favourable numbers close to the effectiveness of the 2-4-D days...if it works?

However, let us not go cutting the cake just yet and licking the icing off our fingers. There was no idea of a launch date, or price point and the ugly little whispers I heard were that Scotts, who own the rights, were interested in a domestic release only and *not* a commercial grade product for us working stiffs.

Other inspirations came from a product called *Opportune*. Up to now we've had very little success controlling crabgrass, so this pre-emergent bio-herbicide would be welcomed if it has suitable suppression of the weed. It too, carries the 2014 launch date, but I can't be more specific than that at this time.

For grubs we are waiting for *Phyllom Grub Gone granular* and there is also enhanced bio-insecticide seed coatings being tossed about. As long as I can replace nematodes some where down the line I don't care what the product is. I also need a high efficacy rate for this pest and not the 50% control we hope for now.

The bad:

The Met 52 EC we had such high hopes for with chinch bug control didn't impress in the least. In fact this fungus comes across as a rich man's nematode and nothing more. There are just too many variables; product must make contact with the host, timing is temperature sensitive and only 50% mortality in the first 48 hours. After that it drops off dramatically.

Guess we play the waiting game once again and see what *Bioceres* has to offer when that little piggy comes to market.

You must also keep in mind that the release information is sparse at best and there is no idea if these products will be cost prohibitive, like Fiesta was, when they hit the market.

The ugly:

It always seems to come from the Ministry of the Environment, who in their infinite wisdom are considering retesting all licenced applicators every 5 years. Great! Like I don't have enough on my plate, I have to acquiesce to another cash grab and that test was not easy to pass in the first place. Any more news like this from M.O.E. and I'll expect Larry and Curly to accompany these stooges at next year's IPM Symposium.

My advice? With the various classes of licences out there, this is not a smart idea. DON'T DO IT.

In all, This year's IPM was an upbeat day. However, looks like we'll have to hang on a little longer to see if the results will match the fanfare and weather it will be "live lawn and prosper", or "so long profits."

Posted by Strange at 10:28 AM No comments:

Labels: [Organic products](#)

Tuesday, October 29, 2013

Invasion of the mind snatchers

Today's tale of horror is better told by someone else. Click on the link to hear [Brian Lilley's thoughts on the pesticide ban](#).



The one part I found scariest was the Big Brother approach Quebec is now incorporating to make sure homeowners aren't cheating with illegal pesticides.

Posted by Strange at 1:22 PM No comments:

Labels: [Bylaw](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Posts](#)

Subscribe to: [Posts \(Atom\)](#)

