

Choosing a Lawn Care Company

*Guidelines on
making informed
decisions to help
you create and
maintain a
healthy lawn*



Community IPM Education Series

**MSU Pesticide Education Program
Extension Bulletin E- 2771**

A healthy lawn can out-compete most weeds, survive most insect attacks, and fend-off most diseases while providing you with a perfect place for relaxing, cookouts and ball games. You don't have to be an expert to grow a healthy lawn, but you may prefer to have a professional lawn care service do the work.

Lawn care companies provide different services such as mowing, maintenance, aeration, seeding, landscaping, fertilizing, weed control, pest management and ornamental and small tree care.

Before You Choose:

- Decide what you want from your lawn. Lush green, pest-free lawns are possible but require a lot of care. How much time will you spend working in your yard? What tasks will you do?
- Ask friends, neighbors or co-workers for lawn care company recommendations. Interview more than one company.
- Be an educated consumer. Don't depend solely on advertising or sales pitches to judge a company's record. Ask for references. Investigate any complaints against the company (see phone #s on the back of this brochure).
- Become familiar with pest problems. Find out more information on landscape pests through your local MSU Extension office or the library.



Pest Management Basics:

- Maintaining a healthy lawn is the first step in preventing pest damage.
- The presence of an insect, weed or disease does NOT necessarily mean it needs to be controlled. Healthy lawns do not need to be completely pest-free.
- Successful pest management always requires an inspection first to identify pests or signs of the pest. Ask to see the pest, signs of the pest or the damage it has caused.
- Pesticides are just one of many options used for lawn pest management. Professional lawn care services should consider other alternatives before spraying a pesticide. If a pesticide is used, it should be applied only to the affected area of the lawn.

Know the Michigan Law

Michigan law requires all pest control companies applying pesticides to hire:

- To be licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture
- To have liability insurance to protect you in case of an accident
- To have state certified or registered pesticide applicators



At your request, your pest control company must provide you with:

- Pesticide product labels and material safety data sheets (MSDS)

Prior to a pesticide application, the pest control company must:

- Obtain the customer's consent

Beware of Companies That:

- Do not have a listed or working telephone number.
- Try to pressure you into immediately signing a contract.
- Arrive unexpectedly and show you insects they found in your neighbor's yard as evidence that you have a problem.
- Claim to be endorsed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture or other government agency.
- Cannot, or will not, answer the questions listed on the back of this brochure.



At the time of the pesticide application, the pest control company MUST supply you with the following written information:

- Name, address and telephone number of the company
- Full name of the pesticide applicator performing the service
- General description of the problem pest
- List of the pesticides applied
- Time, date and rate of pesticide application
- Information on the potential hazards from the pesticide application to people, pets and the environment

Immediately after a pesticide application to a turf site, the pesticide applicator must:

- Post a lawn marker sign at the primary point(s) of entry indicating a pesticide application has been made.
- Inform you to remove the lawn marker sign 24 hours after the pesticide application.

Questions to ask before you sign a service agreement:

- How many years have you been in business in the area?
- Would you provide me with a list of references?
- Is your company currently licensed with the Michigan Department of Agriculture? How long has your company been licensed by MDA?
- Does your company carry liability insurance?
- If pesticides are needed in my yard, will the person who applies them be certified or registered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture?
- Can I see a copy of the applicator's certification or registered technician credential prior to service?
- Could you give me a copy of all labels for pesticides that will be used?
- What are the terms of your service agreement? If you have to return between scheduled visits, is there an additional cost?
- How do you keep your staff updated on new techniques, regulations and requirements?
- Do you evaluate the condition of my lawn before you decide how to achieve the yard I would like?
- Do you offer a variety of pest management approaches?
- Will you show me the pest or evidence of a pest and/or damage it has caused to my lawn? What will happen if I take no action?
- What will I need to do before and after you visit?

All pest control companies applying pesticides in Michigan are required by law to show the company name and phone number, address, or U.S. Department of Transportation census number on the company vehicle.



If you have questions about pest control companies, contact the agencies listed below:

- Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division
1-800-292-3939
- Michigan Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division
1-877-SOLVE-88
- Better Business Bureau
consult the business pages of the telephone book for the office near you

If you have questions about a pest, contact:

- Your County MSU Extension Office
consult your county government pages or call (517)355-2308 for the office near you

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