Plant Growth Regulators for Your Customers : Does It Ever Pay Off?

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For years, lawn care operators and homeowners alike have searched for a plant growth regulator [PGR] that would allow them to skip several mowings each season. These pie-in-the-sky expectations have, for the most part, yielded disappointing results. It is also difficult to justify the cost of a PGR application on a per lawn basis.

During the spring growth flush, many lawn care operators find it necessary to double-mow, bag, or rake, which reduces overall efficiency. For instance, an LCO that could mow 125 accounts in the summer can only take on 60-75 accounts in the spring due to these additional necessary steps. Although this flush lasts only 3-5 weeks it can limit the number of clients. Mowing is often used as a tool to get a foot in the door. Clients are more likely to purchase secondary services, such as gutter maintenance, snow removal, and holiday lighting, from a familiar name or face. More clients means more potential sales.

This study was designed to examine the ability of PGRs to reduce the spring growth flush to a more manageable level, whereby double-mowing and the like would be unnecessary. It is possible that the upfront cost of a PGR application will not be recovered by mowing alone. However, sales of secondary services to a larger client base could more than offset this cost.

In this study PGR treatments were made after the third mowing in the spring on May 9. Clipping production and turfgrass quality were measured weekly during the entire season.