



## AT A GLANCE

**ORGANO-LAWN**

**FOUNDED:** 1997

**HEADQUARTERS:** Boulder, CO

**TITLE:** Brad Wolfe, founder and president

**YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY:** 14

**SERVICE AREA:** Boulder and Ft. Collins, and Front Range communities in between

**NUMBER OF LOCATIONS:** Two (Boulder and Ft. Collins)

**EMPLOYEES:** 15

**SERVICES:** Lawn and tree care (organic fertilization, organic and synthetic combination weed control), humate and RainMaker applications, aeration, power raking, lawn spider mite control, top seeding, tree fertilization, non-spray tree insect control and related services, sprinkler start-ups and blowouts

**HOBBIES:** Skiing, mountain biking, kayaking, travel, photography

**FAMILY:** Single

**WEBSITE:** OrganoLawn.com

**Brad Wolfe** loves to ski. While he wanted a career, he also wanted freedom to ski his favorite slopes every winter. He solved that dilemma as a student at the University of Colorado by starting a successful lawn care company offering “organic” lawn care services. His company, Organo-Lawn, has outgrown its Boulder, CO, birthplace and has added a surprising (and growing) winter service.

**How and why did you found Organo-Lawn?** I was attending the University of Colorado, and wanted to keep my winters free so I could ski. I didn’t want to be tied down with a part-time job, so I knew that I could make enough money to support a college student’s lifestyle by aerating lawns — and about every customer I serviced asked me if I could also fertilize their lawns. I found a good organic fertilizer and started doing fertilization applications. Then customers started asking if I could take care of their weeds, and before I knew it, I was pretty darn busy.

**How has your company evolved since its founding in 1997?** Organo-Lawn has evolved mostly in the products that we’re using. When we started, the only organic weed control available was corn gluten meal. Now we can control about any weed situation completely organically. We have 100% organic products that work great in the rock and mulch beds, and last year we finally figured out how to get a high weed control rate in turf post-emergently without damaging the

grass. This was a huge breakthrough for us.

The other biggest change is fuel prices. However, just like our organic products, we’ve been aggressive about staying ahead of the curve. We started converting our fleet to run on waste vegetable oil in 2004.

**Boulder has a reputation for being “progressive.” What does it mean in terms of lawn care?** Boulder is extremely progressive. It’s also affluent and educated. The people of Boulder will quickly adapt to new ways of thinking, but they will also stop buying services that don’t work. Even though some of the customers in Boulder can be difficult to please, they make us better as a company. For instance, if we are going to bring a new product to market, we will typically do field testing on the product for one to two years before we release it as a service.

**What other business opportunities do you see for Organo-Lawn?** Presently, the biggest opportunity for Organo-Lawn is building our winter business, Colorado Ski Tunes. We basically provide ski and snowboard tuning with free pickup and delivery services. Last year we did about 1,500 tunes and feel like building this winter business is the key to our ability to grow.

**What’s the biggest difference between organic and traditional lawn care?** With our organic focus, our goal is to build a healthy foundation, which means we build the soil. To have a healthy soil, there needs to be a large population of beneficial microbes and bacteria. To achieve a living soil, it must have aeration. It needs warm temperatures and adequate moisture, and it must have food, which is provided by organic matter. If the soil is living, the lawn will use less water and fertilizer; it will naturally fight off fungus and insects, and it will have less weeds.

Traditional lawn care doesn’t build the soil because the fertilizer provides no organic matter to feed the microbial populations.

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