

LAWN/TREE CARE

Going organic

Several lawn care pros using organic soil amendments say they'll never go back to their old ways.

By BETH GERACI

At a time when organic lawn care products are gaining buzz in the Green Industry, one product in particular is making a strong push in the market. And the lawn care professionals using it say they're seeing results.

The product is called Holganix. It's a 100-percent organic soil amendment that functions as a biostimulant, enabling plants to efficiently take up nutrients and pesticides.

Some companies are hesitant to use Holganix, a type of compost tea, because it must be refrigerated in special refrigeration units at 33 to 44 degrees. But the vendor provides and sets up the units for clients at no cost. The units come in three sizes based on the amount of the product a company will need.

"I don't see us going back to what we were doing before—not at all," says Ed Fleming, owner of Milton, Del.-based Lawns Unlimited. Fleming made the switch from liquid fertilizers and micronutrient packages to Holganix two years ago, wanting to reduce the amount of nitrogen and herbicides applied to his customers' lawns.

"The concern was the amount of nitrogen we applied," he says. "We wanted the plant to not be dependent on

it as much. The more fertilizers that we apply onto these lawns, the more we're reducing the biology in the soil."

PLANT HEALTH ELEMENTS

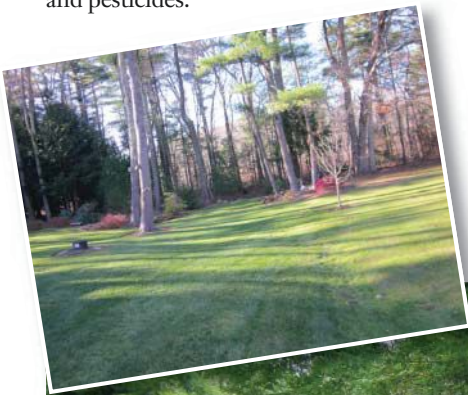
Fleming, who is an agronomist, learned about Holganix from one of his distributors. Since he's been using it, he says he's noted better color, fewer disease problems, healthier and stronger root systems and better control of broadleaf weeds on his customers' lawns.

"Based on the depth of the roots and the thickness of the turf, our lawns just stand out compared to our competition. They're greener, thicker and healthier," he says. "And the program is cumulative, so the longer you use it, the better the results are."

Gerry White, managing partner at Grassmaster Plus in Georgetown, Mass., north of Boston, has been using Holganix since last June. White had a 20-year career as a golf course superintendent before making his foray into lawn care six years ago. As a superintendent, he used organic products on fairways and greens to maintain the health of the soil.

When White saw Holganix, he thought it could help reduce his inputs, including the amount of nitrogen and pesticides his workers applied.

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Grassmaster Plus Managing Partner Gerry White, a former golf course superintendent, uses Holganix soil amendments to reduce nitrogen and other inputs.

PHOTOS: GRASSMASTER PLUS

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“The goal is to have a thicker lawn and fewer inputs of pesticides and herbicides,” White says. “I would say I’ve been able to cut my herbicides down, from a rate standpoint. I want to see it through another season, but I’m definitely intrigued by it and happy with the results I’ve seen so far”—results such as thicker blades of grass that grow laterally instead of vertically, he says.

Scott Whitehead, CEO of Unlimited Landscaping and Turf Management Inc. in Buford, Ga., is new to the Holganix program, launching it Jan. 1. It’s too early to see results, since the grass is just now coming out of dormancy, Whitehead says, but he’s optimistic.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The environmental health benefits and fewer inputs of Holganix are most appealing to Whitehead. “We want to give customers exactly what their lawn needs

and not more than that—to avoid having products just run off into our lakes, rivers, creeks and streams,” he says.

In years past, Unlimited was “fertilizing non-stop,” Whitehead says. But he got fed up with that. “We wanted to set ourselves apart and have a more organic approach than our competitors.”

Using less fertilizer also is vital for Fleming, who’s focused on environmental stewardship. “Using organics is important for being a good steward of the soil and the earth,” he says.

Whereas slow-release fertilizers used to be on Fleming’s agenda, now he’s focused on “preserving the biology in the soil, so the soil can feed the health of the plant,” he says. “It’s kind of like either putting people on welfare or giving them a job so they can be dependent on themselves.”

Holganix can be more expensive than

typical fertilizing products—White says it increased his material costs by about 5 percent. But “the benefits far outweigh the costs,” he says. “If you look at the whole picture, in the long run it will save money because you can reduce your rates,

“We want to give customers exactly what their lawn needs and not more than that.”

—Scott Whitehead, Unlimited Landscaping

spend less time spraying on the property, all of those things are going to build up as time goes on.”

One year into it, White has Holganix on all his trucks. “I wanted to see it last year,” he says. “I wanted to believe it, and I saw good enough results where I made the switch completely. I’m all in, baby.” LM

PVB LOCK BOX

PVB LOCK BOX

The **P.V.B LOCK BOX** will come in one size 24x24x12 this will fit all wall mounted Pressure Vacuum Breaker units ranging from ¾" to 2 ½" as you may have seen at the 2012 irrigation show this product is professionally built in the U.S.A. The product is powder coated hunter green, it comes with the four security bolts and lead anchors it also comes with one security key unlocking bit. This unit wholesales for \$319.99 and the manufactures suggested retail price is \$499.00. Our contractors are installing these units at \$600.00 each and the unit installs in less than 20 minutes.



CLOCK BOX

The **CLOCKBOX** will come in one size 14x17x10 this will fit most outdoor irrigation controllers, this unit will also be powder coated hunter green and come with a removable front cover for access to the unit the locking mechanism will be (2) security hex pin locking bolts and will come with two unlocking bits one for the owner and one for the irrigation or maintenance tech. This unit wholesales at \$259.99 and the MSRP is \$439.00. Our contractors installed pricing is \$539.00 and this also installs in less than 20 minutes. By installing this product this assures that no unauthorized person or persons are tampering with the irrigation controller and will also protect it from being stolen.



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