

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

is a proud member of these green industry professional organizations:

ALCA

Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 12200 Sunrise Valley Dr., Suite 150, Reston, VA 22091; (703) 620-6363.

American Sod Producers Association, 1855-A Hicks Rd., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008; (708) 705-9898.

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, 1421 Research Park Dr., Lawrence, KS 66049-3859; (913) 841-2240.

International Society of Arboriculture, P.O. Box 908, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 328-2032.

International Turfgrass Society, Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences, VPI-SU, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0403; (703) 231-9796.

National Arborist Association, The Meeting Place Mall, P.O. Box 1094, Amherst, NH 03031-1094; (603) 673-3311.

National Golf Foundation, 1150 South U.S. Highway One, Jupiter, FL 33477; (407) 744-6006.

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus, OH 43210; (614) 292-2601.

PGMS

Professional Grounds Management Society, 10402 Ridgland Rd., Suite 4, Cockeysville, MD 21030; (301) 667-1833.



Professional Lawn Care Association of America, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112; (404) 977-5222.

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, 1155 15th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 296-6085.



Sports Turf Managers Association, P.O. Box 98056, Las Vegas, NV 89193-8056; (702) 739-8052.

Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association, 8500 Normandale Lake Blvd., Suite 1200, Bloomington, MN 55437; (612) 831-8515.

AS WE SEE IT

RON HALL, SENIOR EDITOR



DIY lawn care is really not the bargain it might seem

We saved \$60, maybe a few dollars more. In return, we forfeited about six hours of our Saturday leisure time.

This surprised us. When we decided last winter to improve our lawn with a program similar to that of a professional applicator company, we thought the savings would be greater. A professional quoted us a price of \$128.40 (\$120 plus tax) for four lawn applications.

But when we tallied our costs and efforts at season's end, we realized we had undervalued two important variables: convenience and time.

We suspect most do-it-yourselfers make the same mistake.

A lawn care DIYer can choose from a world of fertilizer products. Retailers carry plentiful supplies of turf fertilizers, mostly granular, in a variety of analyses.

We bought the O.M. Scotts four-bag, four-application program for a 5,000-sq.-ft. lawn in early March. Our lawn is just slightly under 5,000 sq.ft. The program cost \$49.95 plus \$3.50 tax, \$53.45 total. The four 15-pound bags included fertilizer products containing pre-emergent, broad-leaf control, and insect control in the first three rounds, respectively, and just fertilizer in the fourth. (By mid-August the price of the program had fallen to \$24.95.)

Another decision had to be made. For \$40 or so we could buy a serviceable drop spreader. But where would we store it over the winter? The basement is too unhandy; the lawn shed full of bicycles.

We decided to rent one, as needed, from a neighborhood hardware store. A Scotts' PF-3 spreader cost \$2.50 per day. We rented it four times this past season for \$10.70, including tax.

So, for a reasonable \$64.15 we grew the best looking lawn in the neighborhood?

Hold on. It's not that easy.

It took us 35 minutes for a single pass over our property.

We followed the instructions on the fertilizer bags, and didn't rush. Even so, in backing the spreader away from several

small trees, or getting into several tight spots around our small storage shed, we evidently applied too much product. A couple of days after the August application, four or five patches of turfgrass, each about a foot square, turned brown.

For the fall application, we set the spreader on half the rate suggested on the bag. We walked the lawn one way, then walked it again from side to side. No problem with burns this time, but we turned the 35-minute walk into an hour job.

For the season we invested just over three hours to apply fertilizers.

Convenience?

We decided we couldn't get an accurate accounting of our effort if we overlooked the automobile trips to buy or rent the materials we needed. Add three hours of driving, loading and unloading.

Presto, we've got six hours invested in improving our lawn.

And it did improve. The lawn, except for one dry week in June, was green and full well into the fall. Because 1992 was one of the wettest, coolest growing seasons ever in northern Ohio, every lawn in the neighborhood looked good. Even the weeds remained a bright green.

A lawn care pro can't compete on price with a do-it-yourself program. We knew this going into the season.

But if time is money, then what is a do-it-yourselfer's time worth? What is our time worth? That seemed to be the heart of the matter as we loaded the spreader into the back seat of the four-door Dodge after the final application.