

BIOTURF NEWS

'Total System' for turf based on balance between organics and cultural practices

Canadian company shows clients that results of organic turf care programs are worth the wait.

■ It's got to make the skeptics sit up and take notice.

A 25-year-old company reduces chemical pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use by 80 percent for a majority of its 4000 customers using a fish-based fertilizer.

Is it because John Edmonds' company is in Halifax, Nova Scotia? Is the turf that much different up there?

Nope. Edmonds Landscape and Construction Services, Ltd.—run by John and his brother Roger—says it has made a success of organics by way of thorough education, patient customers and an effective fertilizer.

Edmonds' conversion to organic turf care began in 1989 when it developed its "Organic Pro Lawn, Earth, Tree and Shrub Care" programs. Employee training came first, followed by customer initiation.

"After demonstrating that organic soil management practices were more advantageous to the landscape in the long term," says Edmonds, "clients gradually began realizing that synthetic pesticides

and fertilizers were an unnecessary step in the landscape management process."

The secret: build up a healthy topsoil and let the natural soil biology do its thing. Some properties are now in the third year of the organic program, and, according to Edmonds, none of the properties is showing any strain. There's less chemical leaching, less thatch buildup, and better disease/insect/drought resistance.

John Edmonds, left, and biology professor David Patriquin are studying the fertility and soil-building properties of different compost materials.



Find the right formula—The next major step was to hit on a product that worked. Edmonds collaborated with National Sea Products, Ltd., to produce SeaGreen 7-7-7 fish-based fertilizer. NSP

now sells SeaGreen across the country. The company also continues to research the efficacy of various other organic fertilizers. Organics expert, Dr. David Patriquin, and the Edmonds staff are also researching the viability of using spent brewery grain as an organic soil amendment.

Current experiments involve the use of white clover seed in lawn mixes to fix atmospheric nitrogen into usable plant nutrients. (see sidebar).

An Integrated Pest Management system relies on pest identification and population monitoring to best determine the proper control method to use, and when. Proper soil conditions such as drainage, fertility, pH and soil structure are all key components.



The grounds around Summer Gardens, a Halifax condominium complex, show the results of the SeaGreen program.

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