

# Group tells how to keep your lawn healthy

By JACKIE KLEIN  
Have you ever been stung by a fly-bitten gardener who sprayed your crab grass and killed your lawn? To prevent this from happening again, you might want to call the Lawn Sprayers Association of Michigan for advice, said Art Brown, founder and managing director of the 54-company organization.  
Brown, owner of Great Lakes Lawn Spray, which serves Farmington, Southfield and other cities, maintains the industry is growing rapidly and there's a need for a professional association.



Spraying your lawn has its advantages, but a local lawn sprayers' group say not all sprays are equal. (Staff photo by Gary Friedman)

One of the functions of the association is education," Brown said. "Lawn sprayers get together and discuss what chemicals work best. We screen members, many of whom have been in business a number of years, and we recommend companies in the customers' areas."  
"We also conduct training sessions for employees, and professionals, including myself, are available for speaking engagements at garden clubs as a free service."

AMONG THE ADVANTAGES OF hiring

lawn spraying companies, Brown said, is that they can buy materials by the ton, lowering the cost to the customer. Do-it-yourself sprayers don't save money, he maintains.  
The worst way to choose a lawn spray company is by price alone, Brown contended. If you obtain several bids, it's probable the lowest bidder may give you the least amount of fertilizer and weed killer, he said. It's also possible chemicals will be applied by inexperienced labor with well-used equipment, Brown added.  
Landscapers, Brown said, aren't licensed to spray lawns. Lawn sprayers must obtain an economic poisons license, he said. It also takes special equipment.  
"It's a good idea to get a detailed description of what the company you're considering will be putting on your lawn," Brown advised. "Some sprayers don't have the balanced formula of nitrogen, potash and phosphorus. The formula should also contain insecticides and fungicides to prevent problems before they occur."  
Weed killer materials should be sprayed every month beginning in April, Brown suggested. There should then be four or five applications through August.  
"CRAB GRASS germinates when the soil temperature reaches 58 degrees," Brown said. "If you wait until the forsythia falls to spray, you'll be too late. If you have flowers around your lawn, water them after the grass is sprayed to prevent wind drift."

Other tips from Brown are not to mow the lawn after weed and feed sprays have been applied to allow the weed killer to soak in, don't plant tomatoes near the grass and don't water your lawn unless the temperature is 75 degrees. If you sprinkle the grass right away, you'll wash away the weed killer. Wait at least six to 10 hours to water the lawn.  
Don't use a power rake on your lawn until fall so you won't disturb or pull up healthy grass plants which are slow waking up because of winter dormancy, Brown advised.  
Grass clippings, Brown said, contain nutrients nitrogen, phosphorus and potash which have been sprayed on the lawn. He suggests they be allowed to decompose and be re-cycled.  
Don't mow your lawn when the ground is wet. Watering in the evening or at night contributes to lawn fungus diseases, Brown said. The best time to sprinkle, he advised, is in the early afternoon. If you're on vacation and your lawn is not watered, he said, it could burn up.  
Brown, a graduate of Alma College, is an active participant in events in agronomy (scientific agriculture), a member of the Farm Bureau, author of "Lawn Sprayers' Guide" and founder of the Midwest Grass Conference which features research and studies from many participating universities.  
Telephone number for the association is 474-8647.

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