

Second in a Series

Sod Farmers' Secrets
On Pest Control
For A Fabulous Lawn

Homeowners (and even professional grounds managers) often wonder how turfgrass sod farmers can produce acre after acre of such beautiful grass. To discover the “secrets of their success” the not-for-profit Turf Resource center headquartered in suburban Chicago contacted a number of leading turf producers.

Specifically, we asked them what “secrets” they used to control pests. Here are their answers...some rather surprising:

“Most insecticide labels for soil borne pests correctly advise you to water thoroughly *after* applying a product to move the chemical down to the insects. A valuable trick that most insecticide labels don't tell you is to irrigate heavily *before* applying the insecticide. This brings the insects closer to the surface where the chemicals can reach them. “

“Apply insecticides (‘bug control’) as late in the day as possible. Here are two reasons: 1. many chemicals degrade (lose some of their potency) to sunlight and heat; and 2. many soil borne and surface insects feed at dusk and dark. By applying insecticides late in the day, the chemicals remain potent and the insects take in more of the chemicals so you get better control.”

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“Apply herbicides (‘weed control’) as early in the day as possible. Here’s why:
1. Practically all plants, even weeds, have pores on the upper or lower surfaces of their leaves that are more widely open during the early hours of the day, when it’s cooler. Contact herbicides move into these open pores more readily and systemic herbicides (those that are brought into the plant by its leaves and/or roots) are absorbed more rapidly; 2. During the heat of the day, plants tend to “close down,” by reducing the pore openings and slowing down their growth rates so they take in less chemical; 3. Spring and/or summer showers that wash away herbicides occur with higher frequency in late the afternoon.”

*Ben Copeland, Sr.
Patten Seed/Super Sod
Lakeland, GA*

“Watch for the forsythia to bloom to know when to apply pre-emergence weed or grub control products in the spring. Typically, the forsythia bloom will indicate soil temperatures around 50° F, which matches the germination of spring weed seeds. It is also when grubs start moving up in the soil to feed on grass roots.”

“Flocks of birds pecking at your lawn are a sign you have some type of “varmint” in your grass...usually an insect that the birds are eating. The birds aren’t eating your lawn, it’s the insects that will cause you problems...the birds are just an indicator.”

“Moss in your yard usually indicates a low pH or highly acid soil. Test the soil and use the appropriate material, in correct amounts, to adjust the pH and rid your yard of moss.”

“Clover can be a positive part of a lawn. Clovers fix nitrogen from the air and stores it in the soil, where it can be used by the turfgrass.”

*Doug Barberry
Aldino Sod Farms, Inc.
Churchville, MD*

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“Moles, voles, skunks, raccoons and opossums can tear-up a lawn overnight. The trick isn't how to get rid of these rascals; it's how to get rid of what's attracting them...usually grubs or some other source of food. Get rid of the grubs and you'll probably get rid of the moles, voles, skunks, raccoons and opossums.”

*Doug Fender
Turfgrass Producers International
Rolling Meadows, IL*

For more information about caring for your lawn and the environment, visit the website of Turfgrass Producers International...the not-for-profit trade association for turfgrass sod farmers at www.TurfGrassSod.org.

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