

# Chesapeake Lawn Science, Inc.

"Your Lawn Nutrition Experts"

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Maryland Department of Agriculture Applicators License # 25513  
Maryland Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management License # MDA-F 0127

## Dear Client,

Thank you for your trust in us and for giving us the opportunity to service your lawn. It's now been 25 years since we treated our first lawn way back in 1995, working out of a little Mazda Miata convertible. As hard as it is to believe, that's no joke. I really did somehow manage to start this business out of a little Miata for the first 6 months until I was finally able to put a down payment on a Ford pick-up truck. I can't even imagine how silly I must have looked but I'm very proud to say that there are still some of you who remember that. It has been a real honor to have worked for a number of you folks for a quarter century now. I say this with great pride and gratitude. In 25 more years, I look forward to saying the same about many more of you. **I encourage ALL of you to review this letter because there is some new, important information about how we can take your lawn to the next level, and to keep it the envy of your neighborhood.**

We just endured the driest mid July - mid October in recent memory. Many of you ran out of time to seed your lawns before the rain finally returned on October 16<sup>th</sup>. We provided aeration & seeding to as many lawns as we could. Unfortunately, a number of lawns that experienced summer turf damage remain unrepaired. Although spring seeding is not ideal, it is better than nothing if bare and/or thin spots are present. Our advice to those of you who didn't get seeding done this fall: do it just after the 1<sup>st</sup> of March (weather permitting). The most effective method of repairing the damage would be for you to aerate and seed. However, there is a less intensive option that will still yield some good results if done in the following manner. You should walk around the yard with a 5 gallon bucket of seed and throw it onto the bare spots, then use a garden weasel to work it into the soil, and lastly use a shovel to lightly cover up the seed with a thin layer of peatmoss.

**If you plan to do this, it is pertinent you do it as early as the weather allows and that you notify us so we can delay your spring treatment by a few weeks.**

## Montgomery County Residents

Montgomery County succeeded in passing unprecedented lawncare legislation. Sad but true. We fought hard and won our initial appeal but then they appealed that decision and won. So, at least for now, the law has been passed. We are exploring our legal options and plan to continue the ongoing fight against this ludicrous legislation. What this means for your lawn is that we must aggressively focus on enhancing the root structure of the lawn in order to keep weeds out by competing for root space. One way of doing this is by increasing the amount of nitrogen, potassium, and micronutrient treatments applied. Our chemical weed control treatments will be replaced with these granular treatments. Another way of achieving this goal will be to core aerate often, at least 1x per year, and preferably twice (in the spring and fall). The third, and most effective way to encourage deep roots to crowd out weeds, will be to utilize the mychorizza (grass steroids) inoculation at the time of core aeration. **Refer to the optional application section below for more detailed info.** Remember that the best means of controlling weeds before they become a problem is to have the thickest turf possible in order to crowd out the weeds by competing for root space.

Many years ago, I came to the realization that there are a couple other greater benefits of lawn care aside from just aesthetics. These 2 fundamental goals of lawn care are to have thick enough turf to control erosion and to not track mud into my house when it rains. Those of you who have dealt with soil erosion issues and/or have kids or dogs who've tracked mud all over the place because you didn't have thick grass will certainly agree with me. Of course, having the nicest lawn in the neighborhood is pretty cool too. With the implementation of these new county guidelines, we can still have the greenest and best lawns in the neighborhood but we'll just need to pull out some weeds from time to time or simply be ok with them as long as we're controlling erosion and not tracking mud indoors. Remember that as long as we are focusing on augmenting the root structure of our grass by increasing nutrients, the overall weed population will remain minimal. And luckily, there is an organic way of controlling crabgrass with corn gluten. It is more expensive

and won't give 100% control, but it is an option. And there is a nematode that can control grubs as well.

A new idea we began offering our clients a few years ago, in order to help make incorporating a fungus suppression program into your lawn's plan more affordable, was to offer the **Enchilada**. It gives you almost all of the treatments we offer at an additional 5% savings on top of your 5% pre-payment savings, for a total discount of 10%. Just over 50% of you regularly sign up on this plan.

Those of you who do not choose the pre-payment option will receive monthly bills for the amount of your standard application rate. This allows you to budget for our program by being billed in equal monthly installments from January – November (no December bill), rather than receiving invoices for varying amounts at sporadic times throughout the year. Many of you set us up on recurring payments via your bank, which saves you time. Your total annual cost will be exactly the same as it would be if we billed you for each application as it is done. **If you happen to move or need to cancel service for any other reason, you will be responsible to make a payment for the month in which you alert us to your cancellation. For example: If you cancel on May 5<sup>th</sup>, you will be responsible to make your monthly payment for the month of May. There can be NO exceptions to this policy.**

### **For example :**

*Say your cost per treatment is \$100*

*You are billed for 11 treatments during the course of 1 year*

*Your total annual cost would be \$1100*

*You will be billed \$100 on or around the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month from January – November*

*There is no invoice in December*

Something worth mentioning in this opening section is that the game changing **mychorizza (grass steroids)** we offer has been a huge success. Those of you who have requested it with core aeration have been really pleased, and with the Montgomery County law in effect, it's the best way of encouraging a deeper and more robust root system to crowd out weeds by competing for root space in the soil.

We will also continue to offer our optional **surface insecticide** treatment for mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, spiders, ants, sod-webworms, crickets, & other pests. Compared to what a pest control company would charge, it is quite a bargain and very effective. Many of you who try it for a season, have it done each year after that because it does such a great job of keeping away both warm and cool season nuisance bugs.

Throughout the year, I am often asked if I know reputable companies that provide other services. I have enclosed a list of companies that I have hired in the past and personally had good luck with. "Good luck" takes into consideration both excellent work and reasonable prices. The list ranges from roofers to mechanics to even an event videographer. The list is based solely on quality and familiarity. I promise you that I do not receive any personal compensation in any form from anyone on the list.

Our current program has been in place for over a decade now and is working great. However, due to certain weather conditions, we may have to switch up the timing a little bit on some treatments, as we have in the past. We may do the cool-season weed control over the winter (if it is mild) or do the lime treatment in the summer if it is too cold and/or snowy over the winter. Whatever the timing, the results will be just as effective.

**A bit of advice for the summer: spend your money on water instead of seed to repair dead grass.** This is really the best plan for your lawn. Your turf will be much stronger and far more attractive year after year. It takes new seed about 2-3 years to fully mature and produce maximum root structure. There are some of you who have never seen truly mature grass because it dies out with each summer's drought and we have to regularly re-seed because the turf is not supplied with water when it needs it. I know that there are various reasons why some of you choose not to water and I am not judging you for this - I'm really not. I am simply saying that from a financial / healthy lawn perspective, the money you spend on watering is more than made up for by not needing to seed over and over again each year and by not needing to apply a lot of peat moss topdressing to allow the seed to germinate. This way your lawn will be healthier and look better in the long run.

## **This packet will cover the following important topics:**

1. Our standard lawn nutrition program
2. Optional applications/services: summer fungus reduction program, surface insect apps, split pre-emergent crabgrass apps, spring core aeration service with no seed, late summer grub reduction, and mycorrhiza inoculation of your turf roots
3. A comprehensive list of very good service companies from different fields
4. **How you can save 5%-10% on your lawn service**

### **1. Our standard lawn nutrition program**

Our program consists of fertilization applications, crabgrass prevention, micro-nutrient applications, iron treatments, grub treatment, limestone, and humic acid applications. The last few years we have also provided our clients with some additional applications 100% free because the weather allowed us the time to do so. Chances are we will do the same this year.

Turf disease is the #1 problem for all lawns in the summer. In addition to the standard program you, should seriously consider doing the fungicides (with a free micro-nutrient mix on each visit) over the summer months if warm-season turf decline has been a problem in the past. **However, don't forget that the best way to prevent fungus in the first place is to mow and water correctly. If you're not sure what "correctly" means, we should talk. Only half of having a nice lawn is what we do. The other half is directly related to your grass getting the water it needs when it needs it and being mowed at 3 – 3 ½", at least every week during the growing season and with a very sharp blade. So mow tall, mow often, and mow sharp.....Need we say mow?**

### **2. Optional applications / services**

#### **Mycorrhiza inoculation of your turf roots (steroids for your grass)**

*Simply said, mycorrhiza is just like steroids for plants.* And remember, because it needs to get down beneath the surface and make direct contact with the grass roots, it can only be done in conjunction with the spring core aeration. This is something we wanted to offer for a long time but up until now it simply was not cost effective enough to do so. However, there is finally a company making a new, cost-effective mycorrhiza product that makes it possible to offer. It was by far the most popular optional treatment we offered last year. **The word "mycorrhiza" literally means "fungus-roots" and it is estimated that when it attaches to a plant's roots, that it increases the surface absorbing area up to a shocking 1,000 times. Literally, several miles of fungal filaments can be present in only a thimbleful of soil. Mycorrhiza is not a fertilizer but actually a fungus that can best be described as steroids for plants.** Plants and mycorrhizal fungi operate as a single working unit in nature. Mycorrhiza exists naturally in our soils but at lower rates than are optimal. One of the main benefits is highly increased drought tolerance, and conversely not having enough of the fungi present on the roots is often the cause of disease and insect problems. Soil is greatly improved by the fungi sending millions of tiny root-threads far out from the plants roots, allowing the plant to absorb many times more nutrients and water than it would otherwise. Unlike fertilizer that can be applied on the top of the grass and can leach into soil, mycorrhiza cannot. It will not move vertically through the soil, so it must get down beneath the surface and make direct contact with the roots. This is why you must core aerate and then put down the mycorrhiza. For this reason, it must be done in conjunction with the spring aeration. If you plan to have us core aerate this spring, you should very seriously consider adding the optional mycorrhiza treatment as well. I encourage you to goggle it and check out the images of the roots of plants inoculated with mycorrhiza vs the ones that are not. You'll see why I am so excited that we can finally offer this treatment to you. When it comes to turf strength, drought resistance, and disease resistance because of the dramatic enhancement of your lawn's root structure, mycorrhizae is a game changer.

## **Fungicide suppression (June – August)**

Turf disease is a common but extremely complicated issue. Most of you who have been with us for a while now know the benefits of reducing summer disease / fungus pressure. There is way too much information to include here so feel free to call us if you wish to discuss turf disease in more detail. Remember that although environmental conditions do play a huge role, **THE BIGGEST** cause of turf disease is mowing too low and/or with a dull blade. Those of you who don't know what turf fungus is, are the few who must be mowing the right way all the time, watering as needed, and are also lucky enough to have a limited number of disease spores in your soil. If you have a lawn service cutting your grass, you are almost guaranteed to have disease problems during the heat of the summer because the microscopic fungus spores are transferred from one lawn to the next via lawn mowing equipment in the same way we can transfer a flu or cold to one another. So don't give your lawn service a hard time. It is not their fault. But, definitely make sure they are mowing at 3 inches, with a very sharp blade, and once per week. If they are not doing that, it is their fault.

**If you have a mowing service cutting your grass, remember that your lawn is being “infected” by your neighbors’ fungus every time the lawn mower comes in contact with your grass blades. The same way you and I will transfer a cold or flu to one another by contact, fungus spores are transferred from one infected lawn to another by lawn mowing equipment. This, in addition to the fact that your lawn will often/sometimes be mowed by a dull blade, and because the lawn will often grow too tall between mowings because of rain delays or other factors, those of you with a mowing service will definitely require our fungicide prevention program.** Just like getting a flu shot or other vaccination, protection needs to be in place prior to exposure to the disease. Investing in the fungus reduction program is wise because the last thing you want to do is to have to heavily re-seed and apply multiple bales of peat moss topdressing in the fall if your grass dies. And don't forget to factor in the fact that new grass seedlings will take about 2-3 full seasons to fully mature and be better able to withstand the stress of summer. So, if moderate or severe damage does occur in any given summer, the next few years will almost certainly require an intensive disease reduction regime while the grass is still in its weaker state of “infancy.” Just like an infant or young child needs a few years of vaccinations, so too does turf grass after it dies out and is re-seeded.

## **Summer Insect Treatment (The 2nd most popular optional treatment we provide)**

This application targets ticks, fleas, spiders, ants, and reduces other nuisance pests such as mosquitoes. This application will reduce the mosquito population in your yard but cannot entirely eliminate them because these insects can fly onto your property from other locations. Not only will this application eliminate lawn pests, but it will help to keep the ants & spiders out of your home and keep the ticks and fleas off of your children and pets. Insect treatments cost a lot more than fertilizer products, and certain customers may require a more intensive program while others may not. It is for these two reasons that we offer it to you on an optional/as needed basis. Because this application has about a 1 month residual, it will be applied from spring – summer. For some of you, this one treatment is enough to get you through the height of the summer. However, those of you with historically high insect populations may need a second treatment in mid - late summer if pests appear again. At a cost of only 2 1/2 times your regular application rate, this is quite a bargain compared to what a termite or pest control company will charge for this same treatment.

## **Spring core aeration with no seed (The time to also have the mycorrhiza steroids applied)**

One important advantage of this service is that we will do both the spring fertilizer immediately following the coring so that the product can penetrate the surface and be deposited directly into the holes to get down deeper into the soil. This will make the treatment much more effective. You have the option of pre-paying for this or you can be invoiced after it is done. Spring core aeration without seeding is 35% cheaper than doing fall aeration and seeding.

## **Curative late summer grub treatment**

Complete grub eradication is very difficult / nearly impossible. The treatment will ensure that grubs will not damage your lawn in the fall when the majority of grub damage occurs.

### 3. A list of very good service companies from different fields

*The following is a random list of companies that I have personally found to be reputable, honest, and offer a fair price for their services. The list is based solely on quality and familiarity. I promise you that I do not receive any personal compensation in any form from anyone on the list. It is for your benefit only. Please feel free to tell them that I referred you to them if you wish.*

\*Stump Grinding = Larry Kenney 301-774-4839

\*Flooring, cabinets, and bathrooms = Rob Pawliske Floor Installation 443-286-0785

\*Tree work/Arborist = Bartlett Tree Experts 301-881-8550

\*Plumber = Bob Sumner 301-370-1903

\*Electrician = Fred Daves (RRF Solutions, LLC) 443-878-2910

\*Guitar lessons = Jeff DeBonis 443-745-6898 (Yes, he is my brother, but he really is awesome)

\*Optician = Olney Opticians (Butch & Kim) 301-774-2434

\*Event videography = Frank McGuire 202-380-7533

\*In-Ground Irrigation / Sprinkler systems = Aqua-Bright 410-489-9009

### 4. Pre-payment and Enchilada savings of 5%-10%

To save both of us time and money, we offer you the option of paying for lawn service in advance for the season. This way you will write only one check and don't have to think about being billed for another full year. Because this will save us time (which we all know is money) by mailing fewer invoices, we will pass this savings on to you. You can save 5% on your annual bill and write fewer checks by pre-paying for your services. If you pre-pay and choose the **Enchilada**, you will receive another 5% which will give you a total savings of 10%. ***Now that's the Whole Enchilada!!!***

*Although it is encouraged, it is certainly not mandatory that balances be paid in advance for this season. We are asking those of you who have used our service in the past and know us and trust the quality of our work to pay in advance if you feel inclined to do so. If those of you who are new customers do not feel comfortable pre-paying at this time, we will prove to you this year the exceptional quality of our work so that you will have no reservations in the future if you would like to take advantage of the savings.*

***This statement is our written guarantee to you that if you have paid in advance and wish to cancel for any reason during the season, we will refund you for ALL remaining pre-paid services.***

**So what do you have to lose?**

*Thanks a lot for your time,*

Rob DeBonis

Owner, Chesapeake Lawn Science, Inc.

### **Payment Terms and Conditions:**

Payments are due upon receipt of invoice. Under Maryland Law, balances that are 30 days delinquent will be charged a late payment fee of the greater of \$5.00 or 10% of charges past due. Collection and/or attorney fees will be your responsibility if legal action is required to collect any unpaid balance. If you elect not to pre-pay for service, we will invoice you monthly starting January 1<sup>st</sup> and ending with your November bill.