1. I would like to know how the groundskeeping “industry standards” compare to your recommendations for lawn care etc - thank you!
   A. The National Association of Landscape Professionals (www.landscapeprofessionals.org) has certification programs by which a company can become a Landscape Accredited Industry Company and there are different tracks by which professionals can earn "Landscape Industry Certified" recognition for horticulture, lawn care, etc. The emphasis on these programs is more on knowledge of the landscape company/individual and not so much on specific practices. Regionally, there is a program for certifying individuals as Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals (cblpro.org) and these guidelines for practices are more stringent and you are more likely to have best management practices implemented. In my mind, the guidelines set by CBLP are the closest thing we have to "landscape standards" in Maryland (beyond our statewide pesticide and fertilizer application laws). For HOA’s I usually recommend that the Landscape Committee become familiar with BMP’s outlined by CBLP, or, if within Anne Arundel County, the Clean Lawn Care guidelines published by the Watershed Stewards Association, and write standards for maintenance, then find a contractor willing to implement the standards.
   B. The short answer is that: Yes, there are standards. My sense is that the more "professional" companies know about and implement them; however, there are a lot of smaller companies that do not.

2. What is best fertilizer for one year old zoysia lawn?
   A. 3 N – 0 P – 2 or 3 K
   B. Use slow release fertilizer, provides a longer lasting feeding. You can find slow-release fertilizer by checking the label on the bag of the bag. Ideally, you would like to have at least 50% of the total nitrogen as “water insoluble” or “slowly available” nitrogen.

3. Is it best to mow the lawn with or without the bag from spring to summer or should the cuttings be bagged only when it's excessively hot?
   A. Bag if the lawn was really tall or excessively wet. Otherwise, mulch-mow without the bag. There is no correlation between the heat and the effects of mulch-mowing.

4. Would you mulch all grasses? That is mulch-mow all grasses, including Zoysia.
   A. Yes, whenever possible try to mulch mow. This includes autumn when you can mulch mow leaves into the lawn to help recycle nutrients and reduce the need to rake/bag leaves.

5. Is the rhizome type of grass (seed) like Titan better than the tiller type here in Maryland?
   A. Yes because the rhizome will help with density and recovery from stress. Cool-season with rhizomes is Kentucky Bluegrass, but it is more disease prone. Beware, some tall fescues are advertised as “rhizomatous”, but in tall fescue this
is really more “aggressive tillering” than rhizomatous, per se. Kentucky bluegrass has true rhizomes.

6. Have you noticed a change in the types of grass that are doing better due to effects of climate change?
   A. Zoysia grass looks the best at the time when we are using out lawns most. Dense, low maintenance, disease and pest resistant. Difficult to establish via seed, so it can be expensive to start from sod or sprigs.
   B. Tall fescue has a new disease we’re seeing here (gray leaf spot) that was only seen in North Carolina but is now being seen in Maryland. This is a late summer disease that can flare up in August. Historically, the weather conditions conducive for gray leaf spot dissipated by mid-September. We may be seeing more gray leaf spot on tall fescue because our region has had warmer Septembers.

7. Are any turf grasses native to Maryland?
   A: Zoysia and fescue are not. Danthonia spicata – Poverty Oatgrass is native to 46 states including Maryland. You can find it on sides of Appalachian trail. It does well in poor soils. It’s expensive because it is not a good seed producer. I have seen poverty oatgrass seed for sale in the range of $350-400/lb. and the seeding rate for a lawn is 1 lb. seed/1000 sq. ft. Compared with tall fescue, which is $3-4/lb. this is price prohibitive for many homeowners.

8. We are told monoculture is bad, so would it be better to several types in your lawn, ie cool and warm season, or other mixes?
   A: If you use tall fescue and/or Kentucky bluegrass, it is good to use 3-4 varieties of tall fescue. You can mix in 1-2 varieties of Kentucky bluegrass so that the KBG totals only 10-15% of the mix. This helps encourage recovery as Ky. Bluegrass has rhizomes and tall fescue does not. (We usually warn against 100% Ky. Bluegrass lawns in MD since it is more disease prone and needs more water to look good than tall fescue.) Usually warm season grasses will segregate out, so don’t mix them. You can also mix zoysia and tall fescue to try to have the best attributes of both grasses through the year.

9. How often should a commercial mowing company be sharpening their blades? And does anyone clean their mower between clients so they don’t carry invasive from yard to yard?
   A: It would be best if they sharpened frequently and cleaned their blades in between clients, but it is unlikely that they do. Some of the better companies may sharpen their blades once every 1-2 weeks.

10. When you say cut no more than 1/3 of the blade at a time, does that mean you can IMMEDIATELY reset the blade lower and take another pass? How long do you need to wait between passes?
    A: Wait at least 4 or 5 days from May -September. A little more leeway in the spring when things are cooler.

11. Should lawns be aerated once a year or every other year?
    A: I encourage people to aerate at least every other year. If you can aerate and overseed every year in the fall that would be more ideal.
12. Can I aerate myself or do I hire a pro?
   A: You can rent an aerifier from an equipment rental store or a big box hardware store.
   Consider renting it for one day and having multiple neighbors use it too to save on cost.
   Typically, the rental cost is $70-80/day, but splitting this cost between neighbors brings
   the per household cost down significantly.

13. Is it possible to aerate very sandy soil?
   A: You can but if it’s very sandy, the need for aerification is much less. Sandy textures
   provide a lot of air in the soil.

14. Is there some particular guidance to the type of areration? I seem to recall something
    like a 3-4” plug?
   A: The deeper you can get, the better. 3”-4” would be great for a home lawn.
   Making sure that moisture in the soil is reasonable and moderate (not too wet or
   too dry) will help the machine pull the best cores.

15. What is your opinion of Milorganite? Can this be considered near zero P since it is
    considered bound P. is this slow release of P and N better than chemical fertilizers?
   A: Most organic fertilizers have Phosphorous and are slow release. Milorganite is a
    great product to use. It is a good consistent slow release product.

16. Is it too late to fertilize a Zoysiagrass lawn now?
   A: Perfect time for now! Warm season grass should be fertilized sometime between
   May and August.

17. Are rules for fertilization different for farms vs non-agricultural areas?
   A: Yes.

18. What are your thoughts on applying the seed and only practicing aerification?
   A: Aerifying and overseeding annually is a great practice since it helps encourages
   oxygen in the soil and increases turf density. Fertilizing correctly using predominantly
   slow-release fertilizers will also encourage density. In my experience, lawns that are not
   fertilized in Maryland typically have off-type grasses and broadleaf weeds encroach
   eventually.

19. What is best recommendation to fertilize a lawn mixed with Zoysia grass and tall fescue?
   A: If you are trying to maintain the current mix or increase the percentage of tall fescue
   in the stand, fertilize in May, September, and October as per a recommended cool-
   season schedule. If you are seeking to increase the zoysiagrass percentage, fertilize only
   once in summer or not at all since this will favor zoysia over tall fescue.

20. Timing to fertilize - if a lawn is dense and healthy, should the spring fertilizer step be
    skipped?
   A: Yes, consider skipping this if the lawn is dense and healthy, although you might still
   consider applying a 0.5 lb. nitrogen/1000 sq. ft. in May or early June before summer
   heat really sets in. Focus your fertilizing in September or October.

21. What do you think about "weed and feed" fertilizers?
   A: In general, I don’t recommend these. One type contains a preemergent and a
   fertilizer. A lot of these products have a lot of fast-release fertilizer. The time to put
   down pre-emergent is not a great time to put down fertilizer. Also for weed ‘n’ feed
   products that target broadleaf weeds you are treating the whole area with pesticide
   when you should just “spot spray” the weeds.
22. Is the presence of moss mean anything other than acidic soil? Can I lime based on moss presence without testing for pH?
   A: Moss likes acidic soil, low fertility, shade, and damp conditions. Moss does not automatically mean low pH. It’s always good to conduct a soil test and lime based upon the actual pH conditions.

23. How do you time fertilizing, over seeding and aerating? What is the order and can you do all in one year?
   A: You can do them all in one day. It’s best if you have time in September. Aerate first, then fertilize, then seed.

24. Can you please repeat the name(s) for water-insoluble nitrogen?
   A: Slowly available nitrogen. Typically, you will see the term “water insoluble nitrogen” on the fertilizer label on the back of the bag.

25. How after you put fertilizer on the lawn, should you wait to cut your lawn?
   A: At least one day, perhaps two. You could also mow first, then fertilize within the same day.

26. Will overseeding decrease weeds?
   A: Overseeding will help sustain and encourage turf density, which, ultimately, will discourage weeds in the long run. If you have perennial weeds already, overseeding will help density but it won’t get rid of the weeds. Depending on the weeds they may reduce in population eventually if conditions are managed to favor grass. Typically, the best way to remove weeds is either by hand weeding or using an herbicide product to spot spray. Products containing iron chelate (Active ingredient: Fe(HEDTA)) are considered a “biorational” and provide an alternative to conventional herbicides.

27. How to aerate where there are large tree roots?
   A: Carefully! Can be tough. Avoid large roots. There are tree spades where you can work around tree roots, but arborists usually have these tools. You can also use a hand aerifier in tight spaces around roots.

28. Is fine fescue best for a shady lawn? And does a shady lawn require more fertilizer?
   A: Less fertilizer- less photosynthetic capabilities. Fine fescues are best adapted for this, but they still tolerate light shade. For really deep shady areas, a different groundcover is recommended like the native Pachysandra or sedges.

29. Fungus challenges in warm weather with cool-weather fescue/ bluegrass mix
   A: The most common fungus on lawns in our area is brown patch, which can cause irregular brown patches of blighting on the leaves. Typically the grass recovers in the fall when weather cools down, however in severe cases stand loss can occur. Culturally, make sure you avoid fast release fertilizers in late spring. You can spray a fungicide containing chlorothalonil or propiconazole preventatively when temperatures are about 70 for lows and mid-upper-80’s for highs with high humidity. There are also biorational products like Zio or Rhapsody that have some efficacy. These may be available at professional-oriented stores like Site One.

30. My yard is filled with anthills, more than any previous year. What is going on?

31. My yard is suffering from an ant invasion as well; I don't want to stoop to harmful pesticides but I'm at my wits end!
A: I don’t know why there would be more anthills than usual this year. However, if you had a few the last 1-3 years, without control they may have just increased to the point where you notice them more now. There are organic products that can be used for ant control. You can find these on the internet or at a local garden center.

32. Zoysia lawn overrun with violets, about 40% covered by violets.
A: Violets are difficult to control. Wait until the zoysia grass goes dormant in late October, then spot apply glyphosate to the violets in mid-late November as long as the ground isn’t frozen. The glyphosate will kill the green tissue (violets) but should only have minimal (if any) effect on the zoysia. Otherwise, you will need 2-3 applications of a broadleaf herbicide (look for products with the active ingredient quinclorac).

33. Best way to avoid getting brown spots in yard-
A: There are a lot of things that can cause brown spots. Think about the 5 major cultural (maintenance) practices.

34. New fescue lawn is starting to yellow in spots. We did do grubx application about 3 weeks ago.
A: Did you scout for grubs or conduct a “tug test” on the turf to see if the roots were still intact? Also, use a screwdriver, shovel, or soil probe to assess the soil moisture. You many have “localized” dry spots that need extra watering.

35. Is it possible to grow both moss and grass in a lawn?
A: Yes, it all depends on the aesthetic you are seeking. Moss does well in acidic soil, wet and shady conditions, and no fertilizer inputs.

36. What about top dressing with peat moss?
A: I would not use peat moss as a regular topdressing, but I would use it as a topdressing to help retain moisture and aid in germination in a new seeding.

37. Is there specific method to use in adding compost to an established lawn and if the lawn is doing well-fairly dense-is there an advantage to adding compost?
A: There is practically always an advantage to adding compost. However, the amount of compost you add will probably be more nitrogen than is allowed by state regulations.

38. Do you like Milky Spore, and is it effective for grub control?
A: University studies have shown that milky spore has been sporadic for grub control. That said, it may work in a local situation over time. However, it has just been too inconsistent to really recommend it as a good control.

39. Would the addition of too much nitrogen harm the lawn?
A: Too much of a fast release fertilizer causes an imbalance. If you overstimulate growth especially in the late spring the plant is using a lot of carbohydrate reserve to try to push leaf growth at the expense of root growth. Too much fertilizer applied at one time can also cause a “burn” to the leaves since most fertilizers have some amount of salt level in them.

40. There’s a lot of noise in the media about 2021 (next year) being a big year for locusts. How badly affected are different areas of MD likely to be? Is there anything we can do to mitigate damage?
A: Do you mean locusts or cicadas? Typically, periodical cicadas don’t cause massive amounts of damage, but they can cause some damage to certain trees via the
oviposition (laying eggs) in branches. I haven’t heard/read enough about a potential locust boom to be able to comment.

41. What is the best way to top coat a lawn to fill an uneven soil level?
   A: It depends how uneven it is. If it’s very lumpy and the grade was not done correctly initially, the best way to proceed might be to till up the bumpy section and re-grade. If there are slight differences, you can try to aerify 2-3 times per year and add small amounts of topsoil each time.

42. How do you deal with Japanese stiltgrass?
   A: Japanese stiltgrass is a summer annual which germinates approximately 2 weeks prior to crabgrass. You can apply a preventative herbicide in early March and this should curb germination. As a reminder, anything you can do to increase the competitiveness of the desirable plants to resist J. stiltgrass invasion will be your best long-term defense. Post-emergent products that control crabgrass like fenoxaprop or quinclorac should also control established stiltgrass, but be sure to always check product labels before using.

43. Best way control Canadian thistle?
   A: It depends if it is in pasture or a lawn/landscape situation since the product availability/labelling are different. For lawn/landscape situations products which contain triclopyr or 2,4-D as active ingredients would work. Since Canadian thistle roots grow deeply and the plant spreads by rhizomes, 2-3 applications are often required. Applying in the mid-late fall should yield better control than in the heat of the summer and using a surfactant to help penetrate the leaf cuticle.

44. How to control nimblewill in the lawn?
   A: Products containing the active ingredient mesotrione can be used as a selective control against nimblewill. Alternatively, spot spraying with glyphosate should provide more thorough control, but will also kill the grass around it. Apply in mid-late August and re-apply in September, if needed, then re-seed the area.

45. Any ideas on getting rid of yellow nutsedge? I have been handpicking for a couple years with limited success. I know the "nut" is down there and has to be removed, but even when I do, I still get more coming up?
   A: Products containing the active ingredients sulfentrazone or halosulfuron can control sedges selectively. Alternatively, if you can tolerate some “collateral damage” you could apply glyphosate to the sedges, then plan on re-seeding the area around Labor Day.

46. How to control clovers?
   A: There a variety of selective broadleaf control products to kill clovers. For the long-term, increasing your lawn fertility level will help deter clover encroachment.

47. How do you get rid of Bermuda grass?
   A: You can use glyphosate and spot apply if you have patches of Bermuda. If it is interwoven you can still do this but you will have some “collateral damage” on the grass around it. This is probably the best control product. Alternatively, the selective herbicide active ingredient topremazone can be used for 3 bi-weekly applications starting in early August. Typically, this active ingredient is not available to homeowners so it is best to hire a landscape professional for this approach.

48. Do you recommend Dimension or Proscape from Site One?
ProScape is a brand that has different product formulations with fertilizer, insecticide, and pre- or post-emergent herbicides, so it depends on which ProScape you are talking about. In general, I would recommend avoiding combination products because the time of year you should be doing one or the other don’t often coincide and oftentimes the fertilizer in the combination product is “fast release.” For instance, if you apply a pre-emergent + fertilizer combination product for crabgrass control in late March/early April that is usually a good time for crabgrass pre-emergent, but you should be looking to fertilize most in the fall for cool-season grasses.

49. Is dog urine contributing to brown patch in my yard? Will increased watering help or hurt? Anything else I can do other than chasing the dogs?

A: Dog urine is very high in salts and these salts are what “burn” the grass. The best approach is to water the spot (and, thus, dilute the urine) immediately afterwards. (Technically, you could do this within 15 minutes, but you would probably have a tough time re-finding the exact spot again.)

50. How to control Canadian thistle?

A: Answered earlier

Helpful Links Shared During Training:

- VA Tech IPM Guide
- Purdue Turf ID
- Cicada Article
- Moss in Lawns
- HGIC Groundcover List
- HGIC Lawn Pests