

Rainbow LawnCare's PESP Strategy

Describe your Organization's Five-Year Goals Related to Pesticide Risk Reduction

Our mission is to provide science-based, environmentally conscious services that promote a sustainable, healthy lawn and landscape.

At Rainbow LawnCare we are steadfast in our commitment to quality and service. We deliver consistently superior lawn care services. We are committed to continuing education, staying on the cutting edge of turfgrass science. We reduce environmental impact wherever possible and promote sustainability in the lawns we service. We guarantee honesty and integrity in all of our dealings with the community. We foster long-term, trusting relationships with our clients, and promise each customer unparalleled value and the finest in professional service.

Over the next five years we will work to reduce pesticide usage in the lawns we service, and continue our commitment to safety for our technicians and our clients with regards to pesticide application. We will utilize only the least volatile chemicals, replacing synthetically produced chemicals with biological or natural alternatives when possible. We will advance an educational out-reach program to help teach community members how to attain a sustainable, chemical free lawn. We believe that we will set the industry standard for responsible pesticide management in our geographic area.

What do you envision doing (broadly) to try to resolve your major issues?

There are several avenues through which we intend to pursue our pesticide reduction goals. Through science and research, education, and integrated pest management (IPM) we will address and redress the common lawn service approach of indiscriminate herbicide applications, irresponsible fertilizer usage, and the environmental impacts thereof.

Through science and research we will build an organic matter soil amendment program which will consist of prescription organic materials for various site conditions. We will determine the effects of natural weed control products, and utilize the most effective as an addition to our IPM focus. We will stay on the cutting-edge of turf science, maintaining a partnership with institutions which research and develop new technologies and products which enable sustainable lawn care.

We will employ education both internally for our team members, and externally for our clients and the community at large. We will build and grow an educational out-reach program for garden centers and community members which will teach the benefits of sustainability in lawn care, and the methods for achieving a chemical free lawn. We will utilize IPM with all of our clients, reducing the amount of pesticides required to keep lawns looking well. Our clients will be encouraged to include aeration and seeding as a part of their lawn care service as a method of building dense, healthy turf which will

resist disease and reduce weeds. We will encourage clients to employ the cultural practices which make IPM a practicable approach to lawn care.

Goal 1 and Tactics

Our commitment to safety for our technicians, customers, and the community is an incredibly important part of our value system. Consequently, our technicians go through extensive training on the products that they use every day. They will be trained in proper usage, storage, and disposal of every product used by Rainbow LawnCare. Technicians will be well versed on how to handle chemical spills, and trained in how to uphold Rainbow's standard of immediate action to minimize impact. Each lawn care technician who applies pesticides will also obtain their pesticide applicator's license through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Our on-site standards require complete clean-up of impervious surfaces, reducing the chance of run-off into storm sewers, lakes, and rivers. Rates of application will be closely monitored to likewise reduce the risk of fertilizer run-off. All fertilizers used by Rainbow LawnCare are phosphorous free, complicit with Minnesota state regulations.

Goal 2 and Tactics

We intend to develop a program based on prescriptive soil amendment. This program will utilize prescription organic matter (POM) as a top-dressing or liquid soil amendment instead of traditional NPK fertilizers. The first step in this program will be a comprehensive independent soil test. Following that we will utilize the POM amendments to build healthy soil including thriving populations of beneficial fungi and microbes which, in turn, will aid in the breakdown of organic matter to usable nutrients for the grass.

This program will begin with research into different POM formulas and their impact on turf in differing soils. We will measure the visual and physiological health of the grass, and impact on microbial populations in the soil. We will also employ soil testing to determine change in available nutrients over the course of the study. Using the findings, we will determine which POM will be used in which situation, and build our program accordingly.

Goal 3 and Tactics

All of our clients will be provided with information on IPM. Consultants will work closely with their customers to develop an IPM plan for each property. This will include information on managing sprinkler systems and watering, as well as proper mowing practices. We will recommend aeration and seeding as a means of building dense, healthy

turf for our clients, and reducing the lawn inputs. Additional recommendations will include fertilization, Prescription Organic Matter application, and regular soil testing. Through these practices, we will enable our clients to achieve a low maintenance lawn with fewer chemical inputs.

We are currently investigating technologies for remotely managing client's sprinkler systems in order to ensure that watering practices are in keeping with our IPM plans.

Goal 4 and Tactics

Over the next five years we will be pursuing both internal and external educational programs. Internally, we will be working on independent certifications, including the PLANET Cool Season Turfgrass Management certification for all of our full-time team members. We believe that the more information and knowledge we have about turf, the better we can employ tactics to reduce our pesticide usage.

Our external goals are more ambitious. We would like to help reduce pesticide usage and increase safety for homeowners throughout the community, not just within our customer base. We intend to extend educational out-reach seminars to the staff at nurseries and garden centers. These seminars will enable their participants to better answer questions about sustainable lawn care and IPM. We also intend to give talks and seminars at local home shows and community gatherings. We believe that the more people understand about building a healthy lawn without pesticides the better equipped they will be to ask the right questions of their lawn company, and the more likely they are to make environmentally friendly choices as they take care of their lawns on their own.