

# Eco-Turf Talk



...for the next generation

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*PJC Organic is the manufacturer of ProHealthy Turf Organic Products & distributor of soil amendments.*

*We provide product, and support to landscapers, schools & municipalities that want to transition from a conventional approach to an all natural organic turf care program for the maintenance of their lawns and athletic fields.*

## Soil Testing

Take any course on organic lawn care, view an article on the internet or read a book, the first thing you are told to do is take a soil test. So, you dutifully take a soil sample, send it off to a lab; get the results back – then what? If it's not Greek to you, it may be to your clients.

*PJC Organic can provide you with soil sampling supplies, the report and product recommendations in easy to understand format.*

## Weed Spotlight: Clover by Fred Newcombe

First comes spring, then comes clover, then comes the quest to ensure it doesn't take over.

Clover is a cool season perennial that thrives when:

- The spring is wet
- Temps remain in the low 50's
- Nitrogen availability is limited in the soil
- Turfgrass is thin, allowing light to reach the soil surface and encouraging the clover to germinate

Unfortunately, we have had very difficult back-to-back springs: none of the last three springs have been conducive to the establishment of lush, vigorous turfgrass as it came out of winter dormancy. However, these spring conditions did favor the further establishment of clover.

Clover seeds will germinate in soil temperatures as low as 45°, while cool season grass seed prefers soil temperatures in the 60° - 65° range. Optimum growth temperatures for cool season turfgrass shoots are between 60° - 75°, and 50° - 65° for root growth.

The graph from UMASS shows the typical shoot and root growth patterns in the Northeast. In a typical, ideal season overseeding should occur before May 15th and between Aug. 15th-Sept. 15th.

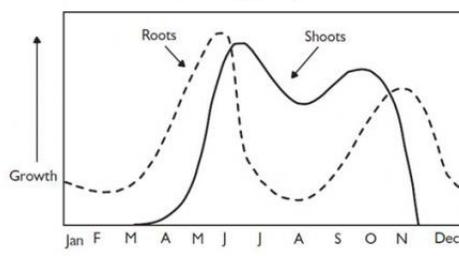
It should be recognized that clover is a beneficial plant; it is a legume that is able to fix nitrogen out of the air and provide the surrounding turfgrass with necessary nitrogen that it could not otherwise access. Clover roots can also be extensive and contribute to the levels of organic matter in the soil. As soil conditions improve and natural nitrogen cycling increases, the amount of clover in lawns should diminish.

## New Product Announcement

### PJC PROHEALTHY TURF 7-0-2+ All Natural Organic Fertilizer:

Our newest product using plant and animal meal organic nitrogen with 2.75% soluble humate. Providing quickly available water-soluble nitrogen and water-insoluble nitrogen for longer feed. Great for early spring when soil is still cool and late summer for drought recovery.

Typical shoot and root growth patterns of cool-season turfgrass species.



## Weed Spotlight (continued)

WHAT you can do about it...

- Increase Turf Coverage** through a more vigorous fall overseeding program. Overseed in spring only if the customer is able to water through the summer.
- Fertility:** review your fertility program and increase delivery of nitrogen. Target #N in residential lawns is 3#N/season - high end lawns & athletic fields target #4N/season.
- Lime** to maintain pH of 6.5-7.0, which is critical to desired soil biology and fertilizer effectiveness.
- Organic Matter:** improve levels of OM to help buffer soil conditions using PJC ProHealthy Turf CHARGE-S3, returning grass clippings and raising the height of cut (HOC). The higher the HOC the deeper the roots, that add to the level of OM as they die and slough off. If cost effective, topdress with a loam/compost mix.
- Aerate** heavily compacted soil causes stunted roots – aerate in the fall, it should only be done in the spring if absolutely necessary.

Because clover seeds have a hard coat, they can survive in the soil for long periods of time, waiting until soil conditions are right to germinate. When we have a bumper clover season, remember they are beneficial in helping your turf grass through a tough spring!



practical approach, proven products

## Get Ready for Spring!

It's been a relatively mild winter in the Northeast, with Jan/Feb temperatures in the mid 30's and March temps warming up to the high 40's. As we move into April it's still too early to tell what spring will hand us this year, but we are hopeful temperatures will continue to warm up and we can return to a normal spring.

Things to consider as you begin your season:

- Soil Test to determine soil amendment needs for the season (i.e. lime, organic matter, CEC etc.). Apply as soon as practical in the season; lime can take up to 6 months to have an effect.
- Dethatching? Over the winter, grass naturally dies and goes dormant: Do not be quick to rake! Aggressive raking can damage crowns of dormant grass, remove valuable organic matter, and create a thin lawn for crabgrass to take hold later in the season.
- Fertilize with PJC ProHealthy Turf All Natural Fertilizers once temps are consistently in the 50's (usually by the 1st week of May and a 2nd application mid to end of June).
- Bare soil is the first place weeds take hold. Once soil temps are over 50°F slice seed or topdress and overseed thin areas that need a thicker stand of turf.

I recommend perennial rye, fescues, and Bluegrass for spring. Turf Type Tall Fescue has become popular for its drought and wear tolerance, however I don't recommend it for spring. TTTF likes soils in the 60° - 65° range to germinate so without irrigation it can be difficult to establish before summer.

- Sharpen mower blades. Mow at 2.5" for the first couple of cuts to push lateral growth, raising height of cut to 3.5" mid-end of May.
- Irrigation: If you have an irrigation system, check for damage over the winter. Replace any heads that may have been broken. Check your watering schedule. Water deep: 1" week and in the morning.

# Let the Games Begin...

After a year of allowing athletic fields to rest, athletic directors, coaches and athletes are eager to get back on the field. Despite the lack of activity on the fields in 2020, many schools and municipalities had to cut their turf budgets to make up for unexpected COVID expenses, therefore leaving fields vulnerable.

With the snow cover gone and grass still dormant, proceed with caution. Rotate practice locations and rest game fields when possible. Fields that suffer from overuse this spring will require an aggressive overseeding program spring and fall. We recommend aerating and overseeding athletic fields twice before mid-June using a TriRye seed blend for quick cover. Grass seed can also be broadcast on bare areas allowing athlete's cleats to work it into the soil. Remember, in an organic program grass seed is your weed control!

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## In the News

### [MONSANTO Roundup & Dicamba Trail Tracker:](#)

Monsanto Update

### **Trucking Costs on the Rise** By Fred Newcombe

Robust demand during the pandemic—along with a shortage of truck drivers and a difficult stretch of winter weather—has made trucking costs both more expensive and more volatile, industry analysts say.

Avery Vise, a trucking analyst at research and consulting firm FTR, said the more recent volatility was likely driven by the continuing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on transportation networks, along with the shock of last month's severe weather.

Pandemic-era shopping trends, including a greater emphasis on e-commerce, have taxed trucking networks at the same time that a reduced flow of graduates from trucking schools has made it harder to hire drivers, Mr. Vise said.

February's severe winter weather in the Midwest and Texas also served up a short-term shock that boosted freight rates, according to DAT Solutions LLC. Dry-van spot rates were up by roughly 35% last month over February 2020, the freight marketplace operator said, and the average spot flatbed rate reached \$2.58 per mile—the highest level since August 2018.

Obviously both supply and demand drive prices, and PJC has seen the effects of increased commodity pricing and transportation costs affecting production costs this season. In addition to product price increases, our customers are incurring higher delivery costs. At PJC Organic we've kept our price increases to a minimum while accepting smaller margins in 2021 as a cost of doing business. We are hopeful that as the nation gets back to normal some of these costs will too.



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