

**Female Narrator:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Lawn and Garden podcast with University of Wyoming extension specialist Jeff Edwards, and co-host Jerry Erschabeck. Originally aired on KGOS and KERM in Torrington, join Jeff, Jerry, and their special guests as they talk all things gardening in Wyoming. Our Lawn and Garden podcast helps you improve your home garden or small acreage.

**Jeff Edwards:** Good morning everybody. This is Jeff Edwards for the KGOS/KERM Lawn and Garden program. With me today, my co-host is Jerry Erschabeck. Good morning, Jerry.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Morning, Jeff.

**Jeff Edwards:** Also, our guest today is Gary Stone. He's an extension educator from the panhandle station over in Scottsbluff. Good morning, Gary. How are you?

**Gary Stone:** Good morning, Jeff. Good morning, Jerry. How is everything going?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Good, Gary. Thank you.

**Jeff Edwards:** Just really good. Thank you. We're glad to have you with us. Let's take a few moments and listen to our sponsors and we'll be back in a bit.

**Female Narrator:** [MUSIC] Looking for the best way to keep up with all the news from University of Wyoming Extension, the College of Agriculture, and Wyoming Ag Experiment Stations? The uwagnews.com website featured real-time education, research and extension events, and feature stories from across the state. Bookmark uwagnews.com today and subscribe to our monthly email newsletter. uwagnews.com, growing people, knowledge, and communities. [MUSIC]

**Jeff Edwards:** All right. Welcome back, everybody. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck with KGOS/KERM Lawn and Garden program. In studio with us today is Gary Stone and we're happy to have him here. I think we're going to spend some time talking about turf and grasshoppers and weeds. I'm going to turn the floor over to you, Gary. Let's get going. What do you want to talk about?

**Gary Stone:** All right. Well, let's see. Pre-emergent products for control of crab grass. They probably should've went out when soil temperature was 55 degrees but things have been kind of cool. Soil temperatures are around 63/64 degrees. So if you haven't put it out yet, you can still put those out and hopefully, get some control of your crab grass. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jeff Edwards:** Gary, before we move on from crab grass, is it too early to apply pre-emergent for control of sand burs or puncture vine if you happen to have those issues in turf?

**Gary Stone:** No, it is not. It would be a good time to apply those because those germinate actually about this type of soil temperature, around 64/65 degree temperature. So yeah, get those out.

**Jeff Edwards:** I don't know if this is correct or not but I use the cottonwood cotton flying. If I get a pre-emergent out before that's done, I think I'm feeling pretty good about my pre-emergent weed control. [LAUGHTER].

**Gary Stone:** Well, the one thing about all three of those; the crab grass, [00:03:00] puncture vine and the sand bur, they will germinate throughout the year anyway. So get it out, get your pre out. If you got

time, maybe five, six weeks later you need a second application and the product allows it, you can put out a second application.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. Crab grass to me is a minor nuisance. It's sand burs that I don't like in my turf [LAUGHTER].

**Gary Stone:** Sand burs and puncture vine, absolutely. Those are the worst.

**Jerry Erschbeck:** Especially if one wants to try to walk across it barefooted.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. Well, puncture vine, you can't mow, right? It grows flat, so you aren't going to get it with a lawnmower other than picking up the seeds with the tires [LAUGHTER].

**Gary Stone:** That's right.

**Jeff Edwards:** So I've derailed the conversation a little bit, but we have one area of our turf that is notorious for having sand burs in it every year. I'm always seemed to be a little bit late getting those things taken care of. Another way to manage them is to save that area and mow it last. So that you're not picking those things up and taking them to new places that don't have that infestation. So, if you're not able to get a pre-emergent product out and you have weeds that get away from you still. It's one of those cultural control type things that we can do to try to manage things even though they might have got away from us this year and then get ready for next year, right? [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** That's right. So anyway, some post products to put out. I know I see a lot of dandelions. It's kind of a catch 22. Our bees, those are some of the first thing that come out, the flower, and that's what our bees visit. On the other hand, they certainly can be a nuisance weed. When I'm out mowing, I guess, I sacrifice my bees a little bit. I've got my little two-edged prong or fork or whatever, I cut out every dandelion I see, at least in the lawn anyway.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. So you're doing manual control, just hand removal at this point in time, right?

**Gary Stone:** Yes.

**Jeff Edwards:** I get a lot of calls this time of year, people asking me what they should use on their dandelions. Right now, it's hand pulling them. Chemically, it's one of those things that if you can treat in the fall, that would be better. Would you not agree?

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely. Fall would be the best time to treat for dandelions. If you do that, you'll really knock them back.

**Jeff Edwards:** Jerry, are you digging dandelions?

**Jerry Erschbeck:** As a matter of fact, I'm not. I'm mowing dandelions. I have seen people in the past carry a little squirt bottle with them while they're mowing the lawn. You'll see some of them bending over to the side and squirting it. Do those spot sprays really work? Are they beneficial?

**Gary Stone:** Well, again in the fall's best time to treat. But this time of year, they're just going to knock them back a little bit. But the root's still there, so they're going to come back. They may not flower but the plant's still going to be there.

**Jeff Edwards:** You're just going to make them angry.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. So if they're taking a time to [LAUGHTER] spray, they might as well take the time [00:06:00] to dig them out with that fork while they're doing it and they'll be much further along.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Little harder with the fork, leaning over a riding lawn mower?

**Gary Stone:** Oh, well, it's a riding lawn mower. Yeah, that's one thing. A push lawn mower [inaudible] , that's a different story.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah.

**Jeff Edwards:** Especially, if it's a 56 inch disk or a deck. I don't think your arms are long enough to get there, are they?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Probably not. [LAUGHTER]

**Jeff Edwards:** [LAUGHTER] So dandelions. What are the things that might be showing up in turf right now that people are concerned about, Gary?

**Gary Stone:** Snakes of all things. I have had a few calls on snakes. What do we do? I say there's not much you can do if you've got a lot of vegetative cover maybe around a fence or something there. They're just out looking for insects, maybe some small frogs or something like that, earthworms. So get rid of the cover like you would for voles and probably your snakes will go away.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. So I don't know if you guys have noticed a lot of snakes, I've seen more snakes this year than I have in the most recent past.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** I haven't seen a lot of snakes, but I have a real good method of avoiding snakes.

**Jeff Edwards:** Running the other way?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah. Run the other way. Scream like a girl, run the other way. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Now, most of the snakes are the garter snakes or the water snakes, maybe occasional vole snake, hopefully, no rattlesnakes.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah. Gary, [OVERLAPPING] it doesn't matter.

**Gary Stone:** It doesn't matter for you, Jerry? [LAUGHTER].

**Jerry Erschabeck:** It does not matter. Snake, run. Well, scream and then run.

**Gary Stone:** One thing about them, you can't move them over a 100 yards legally.

**Jeff Edwards:** Oh, really? Interesting.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. That's a federal law.

**Jeff Edwards:** Back in April, I was peering into my basement window wells and there was one of the hog nose type snakes. The ones that turn over and play dead if they can't get away. I was able to get it out of there and move it less than a 100 yards away [LAUGHTER]. But we have those. They show up April, I thought, wow, that's kind of a weird time of year for a snake to show up. But he was slow enough that it didn't really matter.

**Gary Stone:** It didn't really matter, huh? [LAUGHTER].

**Jeff Edwards:** They get in our window wells and they're going after the toads that live down in there, I think.

**Gary Stone:** Oh, really? Okay. Good.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. All sorts of interesting critters.

**Gary Stone:** So you asked about other critters. While we're talking about critters, I guess we could talk a little bit grubs. Most of the product that you put out for grubs or at least the one I'm thinking of, it usually has a 90 day window of management. So if you back it off August, July, June, now's the time to be putting that product out too.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Most of those products have to be watered in, correct?

**Gary Stone:** Yes, they do. Usually, they are granular if you [00:09:00] do it yourself like I do. Then I run the sprinkler and get about a good quarter to a half inch watered in.

**Jeff Edwards:** Or a well timed rain would be helpful?

**Gary Stone:** Yes, absolutely. [LAUGHTER] Other insects, I guess we want to talk about grasshoppers. They're just starting to come on just a little bit. May want to wait just a little longer just to maybe catch a second flush. So if you're only going to do one application. You can catch the first two with one treatment and then see what happens. Maybe save a little money.

**Jeff Edwards:** It's important to treat for them now regardless of what your treatment method is, because it's a whole lot easier to eliminate the smaller ones then it is the bigger ones.

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely.

**Jeff Edwards:** But we notice the bigger ones more later in the season.

**Gary Stone:** Actually, even a month ago, I had seen some that over wintered-out flying around, jumping around, pretty good size. So it's always fascinating how they can do that. Where they hole up for the winter, just makes you wonder.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. Bugs are cool. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** They are. They really are.

**Jeff Edwards:** Hey, I keep hearing in the news that this is the 17th year of the 17-year Cicadas and we're just going to have a great big flush to those things. But around here, they're not cyclical like that. They're out every single year.

**Gary Stone:** I guess I haven't seen them around my place, [OVERLAPPING] so you'd have to enlighten me a little bit. [LAUGHTER]

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. It's just one of those things about every August and what's that wives tale, Jerry, about first-time you hear Cicadas, then it's how many weeks until it freezes?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Six weeks until it freezes.

**Jeff Edwards:** Is that a heavy frost or freeze?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** It's just a freeze [LAUGHTER]. There, again, those are also old time stories and I'm not sure that they're in this Farmer's Almanac. Some of them are, and I've not seen it scientifically proven, but my wife will always say, "Oh, you hear them singing? Six weeks," and sometimes we're pretty close, September. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jeff Edwards:** I try to not listen to them [LAUGHTER] when they're out in July. [LAUGHTER].

**Gary Stone:** This morning, it got pretty close to what we were down to what, 36-37, it's most the panhandle and eastern Wyoming.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. So we were 32.

**Gary Stone:** Really?

**Jeff Edwards:** That was four days ago.

**Gary Stone:** Geez. Well, I know my younger brother in Idaho falls sent some photos out there a couple of days ago, it looked like they had to 2-3 inches of snow on the ground.

**Jeff Edwards:** Right. Yeah. It's that whole Mother's day, Memorial day, cold, potential snowstorm weekends, right?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** [inaudible] time to plant and now it looks like the weather pattern is going to kick back up and start getting us into the 80s and 90 even. [OVERLAPPING] I think the weather channel reported that most of the United States [00:12:00] can plan on having a hotter than normal summer 2020. So that's their prediction.

**Jeff Edwards:** I think Don Day was saying that, probably around two years ago, he gave a presentation at SAREC that indicated that 2020 and 2021 were going to be exceptionally hot years. I think he's been right about how much wind that we've been getting. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Yeah, I'll agree with that.

**Jeff Edwards:** It has been a windy year, that's for sure, and from every direction, which is really odd. A lot of the wind from the south, blowing the miller moths in. Everybody seems to be commenting about them and how much they're flying around.

**Gary Stone:** I cannot believe how many have made their way into the house and I'd like to know where they're coming in [LAUGHTER]. I must have had about six a day.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. It seems Ryan had somebody call the radio station and a couple of weeks ago wanting to know a biological control method for keeping moths out of their trees. It's more important to keep them out of your house, isn't it? Right?

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. Well, they're just a nuisance and a pain but they are not causing any damage or any harm. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jeff Edwards:** The biological method that I have is a vacuum cleaner or my dog when she's feeling up to it, she'll chase them around and eat a few of them. [OVERLAPPING]. Cats like them too.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** My cats love them. Here at the office, we have a metal door and the metal door faces east. So I have a bunch of millers or moths, those little white guys, they'll get in between the door and the rubber weather stripping and then when I opened the door and there's like six or seven of them. The go, "Hey! Thank you so much for opening the door." [OVERLAPPING]. I bang on the door a little bit and that wakes them up and gets them going. [LAUGHTER] Jeff, would Bt work on that around a doorway or around your windows?

**Jeff Edwards:** No. Bt is not a repellent, it's a growth regulator that- No, excuse me, that's not correct. It's a bacterial product that only affects the larval stages.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Okay. When they're chewing and eating?

**Jeff Edwards:** Right. They have to be actively eating or feeding on the substrate that you have applied the product to in order for it to work. [OVERLAPPING].

**Jerry Erschabeck:** There we go.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah, sorry. I was distracted by something else I think. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Well, what else should we talk about on lawns that we can think of?

**Jeff Edwards:** So let's talk a little bit about knowing when to fertilize and knowing if you are applying the right amount of moisture and those types of things. Particularly, if you have a lawn sprinkler system that you've [00:15:00] got up and running, but maybe you haven't really checked the output recently or those types of things. Any techniques to check and see how much water you're actually putting out, Gary?

**Gary Stone:** For my clients down here, we do have some little rain gauges that we actually give away. Although, with the COVID-19, I don't know how that's going to work. But anyway, in the past, we would give these out, there'd be a bag of six of the these and they would place them out across a lawn and turn their system on for the time that they had planned to run it and it would measure how much water they were putting out and also help determined what the pattern was, if it was adequate enough.

**Jeff Edwards:** Can you describe what the little things look like?

**Gary Stone:** Well, they were just little plastic cups with a spike in the bottom so that you push them into the ground and they would stay up right. Now, if you do have a have a cat and you have a lot of cat food cans, those would work. Those will be about the same size as what these plastic cups were and they measure, see how much water is in each one. Eighth of an inch, a quarter inch, half inch during your set period or your time that you run your sprinkler system. That would give an indication at how much water you're putting out. Grass water use, turf water use this time a year. So it's been cool. But like Jerry said, we're going to be pushed in the 90s, according to the weatherman. I saw, starting this weekend up into the 90, 92, 94 degree range.

**Jeff Edwards:** I can't wait.

**Gary Stone:** When it's cooler, maybe an inch or maybe an inch half a week. It's what's your turf would use. After that when it starts to get to the heat of the season in the July or these higher temperatures, it'll go two maybe 2.5 inches of water per week. So the homeowner has to be aware of that and set their timers accordingly on their sprinkler systems, if they have them, or if they're using a hose and sprinklers, just be aware that you might have to go out maybe another time during the week, other than two times, you might be doing it three times instead. So that's kind of what the water use would be and how to check for it. They turn their systems on and see what the pattern is doing. It's amazing. Some people, well, I'm not getting water here. Well, for some reason, either they drove over that sprinkler head with the lawn mower or whatever and either pushed it down into the ground, so it isn't popping up high enough to get the pattern that it was set to do and so they need to go out there and actually visually see what their sprinklers are doing and if it's getting the coverage that they want.

**Jeff Edwards:** They do, just because of all of that wear and tear, if you're driving over them with the mower or whatever, they will self-adjust and the pattern, not necessarily the pattern but the throw, if you're only supposed to cover a half a circle or whatever, that could change over time [00:18:00] and it might not be covering the area that you think that that particular sprinkle head should be doing.

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely. The other thing that's really easy to do to check to see if they are getting adequate moisture on their turf is to get a screw driver a the shank that's 6-8 inches long and go out there and probe the turf. If it goes in easily, well, then, you know you've got enough moisture for the next 2 or 3 days. If it goes in fairly hard, you need to get the water out and get it going.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** We always happen to see we're driving along and we see somebody's water system that has broken and they're [LAUGHTER] Old Faithful out the corner of their lawn, that's the only spot that's getting wet and sometimes you just don't realize that that's all you have going on. You go well, I'm running my sprinklers, but only this other area is green, how come? [OVERLAPPING] Good idea to look at your spray pattern as well, you bet.

**Jeff Edwards:** Look at look at each zone, right? Turn it on, make sure all the heads in each zone are operating as they should and that should be part of the de-winterizing of your sprinkler system every time you turn it on in the spring is checking all those out.

**Gary Stone:** Yes. I mean, I don't know what the water bills are in town. I know what I pay out here even when I turn the pump on. Make good use of that water. It's not something we can take lightly.

**Jeff Edwards:** I guess that's the other thing to think about and for folks in Torrington if there are water restrictions that go into place, you only water on certain days, those types of things. Make sure you pay attention to those.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah, you don't want to be watering the street, because that doesn't grow very much turf out there. [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabek:** I have tried to water the flowers here at the office and my mind just goes somewhere else, and not on my 10 minutes that I'm supposed to be watering and I just do an irrigation as the gravity flow. Sometimes it will make the street before I'm like, "Gosh dang it, got to get that water turned off." I feel bad because you're right, water in the concrete doesn't grow a thing.

**Jeff Edwards:** That's right.

**Gary Stone:** What you need to do, Jerry, is get you one of these little kitchen timers. That's what I do around here, if I got calls or something coming in. I'll set it so that I got like a 10-minute buffer. When it counts down, hey, I don't miss my call, or got something in the oven, or things like that. You need to buy a little kitchen timer, Jerry.

**Jeff Edwards:** Pin it to your shirt. [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabek:** Carry it with us. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Actually, there are some that you can wear around your neck that work like that.

**Jerry Erschabek:** Yeah. I'm going to be looking for one.

**Jeff Edwards:** Hey, I think this looks like a natural break time. Let's take a few moments and listen to our sponsors. When we come back, we will spend [00:21:00] some more time talking with Gary Stone about yard and garden items.

**Female Narrator:** [MUSIC] Starting May 18th, some University of Wyoming Extension offices will be open to the public. Contact your local office to learn about your county's variances for COVID-19 restrictions. Even if your county remains closed, you can always contact your local educator by phone or email. Go to [wyoextension.org](http://wyoextension.org) to find your county's contact information. [MUSIC]

**Female Narrator:** You are listening to the Lawn & Garden podcast, presented by University of Wyoming extension, extending the land grant mission across the state of Wyoming, with a wide variety of educational programs and services. Visit us at [wyoextension.org](http://wyoextension.org) [MUSIC]



**Jeff Edwards:** Okay. We're back. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck with KGOS/KERM Lawn and Garden program. Our guest today is Gary Stone and we've been talking about turf and keeping it well watered, making it look good with a little bit of weed control. Gary, one of the things that folks think that they need to do is fertilize their turf. What type of recommendations do you have to do that? How can we self-assess whether or not we need to fertilize or if it might be some other type of issue?

**Gary Stone:** Well, the ideal way would be, of course, to take a soil test of your turf and see just what you have out there. Soil tests run about \$20, \$22. Reputable labs, you know, there's quite a few around here. Well, I shouldn't say quite a few, but the labs that are out here are reputable. If you send it to any one of those, they would give you a good answer. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jeff Edwards:** We can also send it to the lab at CSU?

**Gary Stone:** Yes.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah.

**Gary Stone:** I think they're the only university-run, close-by soil testing lab that we have because I know Wyoming and Nebraska both closed both of theirs down. But as a rule of thumb, a pound-and-a-half of nitrogen in the spring, and now would be a good time to put it out. Try to get something that has at least 50 percent slow release nitrogen. By that, I mean, it could be sulfur coated or could have a poly coat on it. What that does, that breaks down slowly over time and gradually feeds the turf a nitrogen source. You don't put a quick release out all at once. A couple of things could happen. One, it could burn the turf. Two, you get a huge massive growth of grass and then nothing. You want to use a slow-release, feed that turf over the long period, throughout the summer, especially going into the hotter months of the year when the turf actually wants to not grow because it has a cool [inaudible] and grass, so you just want to maintain it.

You don't need a lot of phosphorus [00:24:00] generally. Potash, maybe, but again, not much. The other two things that we generally do need in our area are sulfur and iron. The sulfur is there to lower the pH, to make some of these other nutrients available, and the iron is there to keep the turf nice and green. I always have to put out a bag or two of iron on my turf, just because I know mid-summer, it's going to start to turn yellow on me and it doesn't look good, so I put some iron out, green it up, and we're good to go into the fall.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah, and it perks it right up usually, which is kind of amazing. That's the other thing about iron. If you are, I wouldn't say opposed to mowing, but not necessarily enjoy mowing, [LAUGHTER] you can put out iron to green it up without causing the turf to grow a lot, correct?

**Gary Stone:** Correct. But you still need some nutrients there to develop a good root system so that it would get into to the hotter part of the year. You've got a nice deeper root mass to help draw on moisture if water becomes short, things like that.

**Jeff Edwards:** You're recommending not to throw just plain straight iron on your lawn then?

**Gary Stone:** I still try and shoot for that at least pound, pound-and-a-half this time of year, with, at least, a 50 percent slow-release, just to get the grass going, perk it up, get those roots going down. Then later on, like Jeff said, if it starts to yellow out on us, put some iron and sulfur on and you're good to go throughout the summer.

**Jeff Edwards:** What do you mean by a pound, a pound-and-a-half? Is that per 1,000 square feet? Per acre? [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. I should have explained that. That's a pound, pound-and-a-half per 1,000 square feet, and that's active [inaudible]. You need to do some little calculations. If a bag says it's 46-0-0, that's straight nitrogen. Quick release, which I do not recommend, but I'm just using that as an example. If you need a pound of that, you would divide one by 0.46. I don't have my calculator handy, and then that would give you how many pounds of product that you would need to apply for 1,000 square feet. Then you would need to calibrate your spreader, and go out and mark out an area, and actually, see how much product you put out at a given setting over a 1,000 square feet.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. Calibrating granule spreaders is important. It's a little bit challenging, but you can do it.

**Gary Stone:** Yes. It does take time to do it right. We don't want to put on too much. It ends in our sewer systems, our runoff, it creates algae and things that we don't want to see in our water. We want to keep our water source as clean as possible.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. Calculating incorrectly on the low side is [00:27:00] better than calculating incorrectly on the high side?

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely. I mean, you could always go back, if you didn't put on enough and put on a second application if you had to.

**Jeff Edwards:** Right. Jerry, do you fertilize your turf?

**Jerry Erschabek:** Yes, I do. I have the unique ability to have a guy that comes and does that for me.

**Jeff Edwards:** Nice.

**Jerry Erschabek:** He does some aeration and he does my fertilization. I fertilize my garden though. When I calibrated my spreader, I just have a handheld spreader and my garden is about 50 by 50, so that's 2,500 square feet. I calibrated it by weighing my spreader. That was about three pounds. I think, I'm right in on top of that as a right thing to do because the garden, I'm spreading one of those a week. [LAUGHTER] Now wait a minute.

**Gary Stone:** Jerry, what's the blend that you're using?

**Jerry Erschabek:** 25-5-5.

**Jeff Edwards:** You're putting on way too much nitrogen. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jerry Erschabek:** But it says it's four pounds for 1,000 square feet.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. Your garden does not need a lot of nitrogen. Maybe your sweetcorn early on to get it going, but the other vegetables and everything, they're more interested in the phosphorus and the

potash. Not so much nitrogen. I mean, you'll get a lot of growth, but you won't get a lot of fruit or vegetables set on.

**Jerry Erschabek:** All right. Well, good to know. I'm going way too hard.

**Jeff Edwards:** So cut back. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Actually, change what you're putting on. Putting this is okay, it's a high nitrogen. But then later on in the season, if you want to apply more, you want something with a lot less nitrogen and more phosphorus and potash.

**Jeff Edwards:** Something that's more of an even blend like a 10-10-10 or a 12-12-12, is that what you're taking talking about?

**Gary Stone:** Yes.

**Jerry Erschabek:** Okay. So I did have a soil test and they said, "Man, you guys need a lot more nitrogen than what you've got." The pH was 8.3, which is pretty high. That's why I went with the iron and the sulfur.

**Gary Stone:** Yes.

**Jeff Edwards:** Well, the iron and sulfur is important.

**Jerry Erschabek:** But that's a little too much?

**Jeff Edwards:** Too much nitrogen.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah, that's a pretty strong hit of nitrogen. Yes [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabek:** Okay. All right. I'll slow way down then.

**Gary Stone:** [LAUGHTER]

**Jeff Edwards:** Maybe skip three weeks before you think about applying again.

**Jerry Erschabek:** Maybe once a month, right? [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Yeah, even that's going to be more than enough. [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabek:** Even that's a little much. All right. I'll put the rest of that on my pumpkin. [LAUGHTER]

**Gary Stone:** Well, you're going to get a lot of vine and maybe not so much big pumpkin.

**Jerry Erschabek:** Yeah. It's going into the ground this weekend, I think though.

**Gary Stone:** Okay.

**Jerry Erschabek:** It up a little bit and we're going to plant that in the garden.

**Jeff Edwards:** Since we had our last frost-free day, this week, maybe. [LAUGHTER] [00:30:00] You might be okay. [LAUGHTER] Hey, Gary, before we get away from turf, I have one more question for you. Folks talk a lot about dethatching and aeration. Can you share with us what both of those are and why you would want to do either of them?

**Gary Stone:** Okay. We'll talk about the thatch first. If you've got maybe a half-inch of thatch, that's fine.

**Jeff Edwards:** Well, wait a minute. When you say thatch, what are you talking about?

**Gary Stone:** Okay. That's a buildup of organic matter between the soil surface and I want to say the crown of the grass.

**Jeff Edwards:** The growing point of the grass plant? Okay.

**Gary Stone:** But roots are still reaching through and they're doing fine. If you get anything thicker than a half-inch of thatch, that's going to be detrimental because your roots are growing in the thatch and not in the soil. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jeff Edwards:** Do we have instances where we have a lot of thatch in our country?

**Gary Stone:** I have not seen that much, if at all.

**Jeff Edwards:** Okay.

**Gary Stone:** It just doesn't seem to build up here or around in our areas.

**Jeff Edwards:** Even if every time you mow, you are not bagging it, you're allowing it to mulch itself back into it. We just don't see thatch buildup, do we?

**Gary Stone:** No, because the mulch or the grass clippings that you're putting back break down fairly quickly, and over the course of the summer, you might gain a pound-and-a-half of nitrogen from those grass clippings. They're another nitrogen source for your turf and it's an organic way to feed your lawn.

**Jeff Edwards:** Which we've talked about on other programs, right, Jerry?

**Jerry Erschabek:** Absolutely. [LAUGHTER] A pound. It's about what they give by putting your grass back onto the turf. You're getting about a pound of nitrogen, is that a year or is that a month?

**Gary Stone:** You get a pound for the growing season throughout the summer.

**Jerry Erschabek:** Throughout the growing season?

**Gary Stone:** Yes.

**Jeff Edwards:** Okay. We have thatch figured out. We wanted to maybe talk about aeration.

**Gary Stone:** That's always a good thing. We want to try and do that early in the spring, although I wouldn't say now is too late or in the fall would be another good time. What that does is that opens up the soil, lets those grassroots breathe because they also need oxygen, helps them expand their roots. Seen plenty of photos from the turf conferences and the programs that we've put on with Ted Koski or Dr. Koski from CSU come over and spoke, and he's shown when you aerate, that opens up and you could be amazed how deep those bluegrass roots can grow when that's opened up.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Okay. So would you recommend aerating annually?

**Gary Stone:** About every other year, every third year should be enough to do that. Unless you have a place in the lawn where the [00:33:00] soil might be fairly heavy, heavy silt, or maybe a heavy clay type soil, you might want to try and do that every year then. Just open that up a little bit better.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Okay. How does a lawn sprinkler system fare when you aerate? Do you have to go around and mark where all the heads are before you go over it with an aerator?

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely. You need to mark where you go around and do that. Otherwise, you could knock your sprinklers out. Maybe poke a hole in the sprinkler line, which wouldn't be good. So yes, go around, mark all your sprinkler heads before you try to do anything like that.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** All right. So it might be a good idea to be early enough in the spring when you can actually turn your system on, mark all the heads, and then either have somebody run an aerator or you can rent those types of machines to do that yourself, correct?

**Gary Stone:** Yes. You can rent them or have somebody else do it for you.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Usually, how does an aerator work? I know it takes core plugs, I guess. About how deep does it go?

**Gary Stone:** You'd like to have it go at least a couple of inches deep, and then there's one that's do the cores, and then there are those that do a spike.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** They just punch a hole in it.

**Gary Stone:** Yeah. But my preference is the cores, because that opens it up. Then if you needed to put some new seed out, you could do that. Some of that seed will fall down in those holes. It's the right place for it, it'll stay moist while it comes on. The cores, you can sweep them up, but you don't have to because eventually over time they will break down and help feed the other grass.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Would you fertilize after you aerated?

**Gary Stone:** You could.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Okay.

**Gary Stone:** Absolutely.

**Jeff Edwards:** Not at Jerry's rate but at the [LAUGHTER] recommended rate.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Not at my rate.

**Gary Stone:** [LAUGHTER] It's just a direct [OVERLAPPING] one to one-and-a-half pounds.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** All right. Me and the tiller and fertilization now. [LAUGHTER] Gary, we have a little section that had been used as a driveway and so that's the first area that always dries out in our lawn. If you would aerate, you know those little granules that you can put into a pot that is water-loving, they swell up?

**Gary Stone:** Yes. I believe I know what type of product you're talking about. [OVERLAPPING]

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yes. If a guy could aerate, would it behoove him to sprinkle some of those water-loving crystals out and going into those holes?

**Gary Stone:** You got to remember, yes, it takes up water, but then the plant's got to exude energy to draw that water out of those crystals. What I would recommend is put a good compost out there.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Oh, yeah.

**Gary Stone:** Build up your soil so that it isn't as tight. That compost will break down slowly, fertilize it a little bit, add some organic matter, help [00:36:00] build the soil structure so that it isn't as tight, or as tough as that area is. Make it more like the rest of your lawn.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Can you put that into a spreader though? That compost?

**Gary Stone:** Yeah, absolutely. That's another thing that you could put on your lawn. Maybe it might get a little expensive, but maybe putting a half-inch of compost over your entire lawn certainly will help it.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Well, can I talk about one other thing that I noticed in my lawn? I had a tree and then we took it out, and so instead of a buildup, it's actually a dip. How do you take care of dips in a lawn?

**Gary Stone:** You're going to have to find somebody that has some good topsoil that you know is hopefully fairly weed free, doesn't have any trash in it and just fill in that spot and put some new seed in and let her grow.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Now, have you ever heard about just cutting a square? You'd cut a-line north and south, east and west, and then lift that up and then put dirt in your divot and then lay the grass back over.

**Jeff Edwards:** Or you already have turf growing in the hole. [OVERLAPPING]

**Gary Stone:** Okay. You already have turf. Yeah, you could do that. Just open the turf up, peel it back like you said, and then put some good soil in underneath it, soil sand mix. You want to make sure that you get enough of the root system when you cut it to lay it back so that you don't just cut your roots off your grass and they don't have anything to grow back with.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** How thick would you want that, Gary?

**Gary Stone:** You'd want to least an inch or better of soil underneath there. You want as much that grass root mass that you can get. Now, I've got a situation I've had them take a tree out, I just have the divot, but I don't have any grass. I put some new grass seed in and I'm hoping it'll start to take eventually and fill that in.

**Jeff Edwards:** Jerry, I'd recommend that you rent a sod cutter and cut the sod out and then get enough soil back in there so that you're up to grade and then put your sod back on.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Oh, yeah. Good [OVERLAPPING].

**Jeff Edwards:** You're doing your own little reclamation project there, you know, right?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** I do know that. [LAUGHTER] But if I have these problems, I know that other people have them as well.

**Gary Stone:** Sure.

**Jeff Edwards:** Yeah. It's not a problem, it's just something you got to take care of.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah. The area that's underneath the swings, I don't mind having that little divot under the swing, but I really don't like it out by the fence or where the lawnmower has to go down, it's not a hole, it's just [OVERLAPPING].

**Jeff Edwards:** Do you and Myrna have a swing set that you guys play on, Jerry?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** As a matter of fact, we do. [LAUGHTER] [00:39:00] We have grandkids, but every so often I sit down on the swing as well and let time pass us by and take a break, and then get up and mow the lawn again.

**Jeff Edwards:** Have little childhood memory.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah.

**Jeff Edwards:** Well, I think we might be getting close to time to wrap up. Jerry, were there things that you would like to bring forward before we sign out today?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yes, as a matter of fact, we had a giant pumpkin seed giveaway, and I would like to congratulate Shannon Pickenpaugh. He correctly identified our question about companion planting. And I would like to shout out Gary Stone, our guest today, he actually also won a set of seeds.

**Gary Stone:** Thank you.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** You're welcome.

**Jeff Edwards:** Congratulations Gary, and Shannon as well. [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Yeah. So we probably want to talk about the idea that pumpkins are going into the ground. You're not too late to plant pumpkins, or giant pumpkins even. We want to enjoy all those Bullock orioles that we're seeing now by putting out a little grape jelly and oranges. We're getting more rhubarb. It's like the zucchini season of rhubarb. [LAUGHTER] So, can I ask real quick, rhubarb, if the leaves are frozen, does that mean the stalk is now not good to eat?

**Gary Stone:** I would think the stalk would still be okay. You're going to probably cook it anyway.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** I would think so.

**Jeff Edwards:** I know ours are showing a little bit of hail damage, the stalks are, and Diane will go out and pull it and trim that up, and either wait for new or use parts of it.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** I thought I heard something about if the leaves were frozen that made the plant poisonous, something?

**Jeff Edwards:** Well, the leaves are poisonous anyway, right?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Right.

**Jeff Edwards:** I don't know if it will affect the stalk, if the leaves are froze or not.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Okay.

**Jeff Edwards:** Have you seen something, read something?

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Well, again, that's that old wives tale about the cicadas. I was trying to see if you guys had some information about it.

**Jeff Edwards:** I do not.

**Gary Stone:** I don't either.

**Jerry Erschabeck:** That's a good topic for another day.

**Gary Stone:** All right. [LAUGHTER]

**Jerry Erschabeck:** Gary, I've really enjoyed visiting with you. Thank you so much.

**Gary Stone:** You bet, both of you guys. Sorry, I missed the first go around, but hopefully, you'll have me back again sometime.

**Jeff Edwards:** That's okay. We'll have you back again. I got to work on the rest of the schedule for June now.

**Gary Stone:** All right. You guys take care.

**Jeff Edwards:** All right, talk to you later.



**Gary Stone:** All right, bye.

**Jeff Edwards:** Thank you for being on the program. Thanks everybody for listening. [MUSIC]

**Female Narrator:** You've been listening to Lawn & Garden with University of Wyoming Extension specialist Jeff Edwards, and co-host Jerry Erschabeck. Next week, we welcome Joyce Evans, the mayor of Fort Laramie. Thanks for listening.