

Hey, Wyoming, [MUSIC] 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 all their special guests as they talk all things gardening in the great State of Wyoming, from plant variants, to weather events, to pesticides, and pollinators. Our Lawn and Gardening podcast helps you improve your home garden as well as your small acreage. Let's welcome Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck, happy gardening folks. [MUSIC]

Good morning, everybody. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS, KERM Lawn and Garden program. Good morning, Jerry. How are you today?

Hey, really good. Thank you.

Our guest today is Tom John McCreary. Hello, Tom, how are you?

How are you guys?

Morning Tom?

I was looking forward to this, of course. [LAUGHTER]

That's awesome. Before we get started, let's take a few moments and listen to our sponsors and we'll be back in a bit.

[MUSIC] This summer, Wyoming First Lady, Jennie Gordon's Wyoming Hunger Initiative, the sense of a nutrition program and the University of Wyoming Extension are partnering to launch a program called Grow a Little Extra. We invite you to join us in growing a little extra to donate fresh produce to local anti-hunger organizations that support our neighbors facing food insecurity. Stop by your local extension office to pick up your free seeds or donate extra from your garden harvest. For more information, visit www.nohungerwyo.org/grow, www.N-O-H-U-N-G-E-R-W-Y-O-O-R-G/G-R-O-W.

Hello everybody. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS KERM Lawn and Garden program, along with our guest Tom McCreary and we've got, well, actually our program for this week started last week, so I don't know whichever one of you guys want to talk about this first, but we'll just go into it. How's that feel, Tom, do you want to take the lead?

I have a friend from the bank, and I went out and looked at her lawn last year and her grass was dying. I told her I'd get a hold of you guys and we'd come out and look.

It just didn't look good, did it?

Dead spots all over the place. We went out and played agricultural detectives.

Yard CSI.

Right.

[LAUGHTER] Sleuthing, yard sleuthing.

In all reality, it's kind of fun. It's not the best way to meet people but part of the university process is to or service is to go out and assist people with yard calls and try to identify their problems. It's all a matter of asking the right questions and trying to find what's going on. But what we did because we really don't know what's going on there yet is, we took some soil samples, those have been submitted to the ward lab in Nebraska, and we should have results by sometime next week. That'll eliminate some things and tell us some things about the soil, which if Kaitlyn Yang quest was here, she could help us in that manner. The other thing that I did was we took a lot of pictures and I submitted those to Bill Stump at UW to see if it could be possibly a disease-related problem. He was a little bit flummoxed by them as well and submitted them on to another individual at the University of Wyoming and they chatted about it awhile and they don't really think that it's disease-related. We'll have to wait and find out what's going on with the soil sample and talk about it a little bit more. But Jerry, what did we see when we were there this last week?

We saw bare soil against the west side of the house and apparently, it was sodded some years ago and it just seemed to slowly dissipate and just start evaporating. Not evaporating, [LAUGHTER] but it's just decimating.

Grass evaporates? [LAUGHTER]

Yeah, grass evaporates. But the backyard was sodded little bit later on and a year later, whatever, it's doing rather well. There was a garage that was on the area interests and some fill dirt maybe put in, don't know what, where, or what the fill dirt was and it's heartbreaking when you spend money for sod and it only lasts for like two or three years.

Something's going on.

It dies off. So a lot of bare spots.

Well, the thing I noticed when I was digging through the soil sample, again, preparing it is it's really sandy soil, sandy gravelly. We're just going to have to wait and see what the soil analysis looks like before we dig any further, but I think it may need a little topsoil or some compost on it or something to help change what that soil profile looks like.

The big thing is that they had a watering system in place. It wasn't a drought condition that started this off, but like you said, we don't know exactly what's going on, but the soil testing should help us out a little bit and then we can hopefully get them together and make some recommendations.

More to come later and hopefully, we have solutions.

The interesting thing when I first got there, I thought that it was probably fungus. Then we've got to look a little closer and the soil was so compacted. When I was with hollow sugar core, we used Pramitol on the power drums, that's our gap.

It looked a little bit like that. Pramitol for those who don't know, it's sometimes referred to as a soil sterilant. It's not necessarily a sterilant, but it does kill everything and it has quite a bit of residual. Depending on where the fill dirt came from, what it had been used before, herbicide injury is also a possibility, but we'll just have to work on it. Tom, did you go out and pull a soil sample and start a soil bio assay for us?

Jeff, I haven't yet, but I will get that done in the next couple of days. What that is, is when I was at the University of Wyoming, we used to see if there was [inaudible 00:07:02] damage by growing garden beans. If they came up and started to curl and look yellow, we knew that there was a real problem. We would get back to the people that had the problem and tell them what was going on.

Yes. Basically what we're referring to is Tom John is going to take a soil sample and fill a plotter, that's not the right word either, a pot [LAUGHTER] of soil and then plant beans in it and try to grow them and get them to germinate in it and see if there's any pesticide residue that's hanging out in there. If they grow fine, we can roll that. That would be helpful.

The reason we use beans was because they're so sensitive to everything and so you can pretty well tell what's going on as far as herbicides.

Now, I never knew that and I thought that that was just a remarkable simple way to test your soil.

It is a simple way to test your soil.

I thought that was a great idea. Tom John, you said that the soil was compacted and I also have had a small area on the south side of my new garage that I purchased some fill soil and I think that it came from the basement as someone dug out for a foundation. Typically around here, I'm pretty much thinking that we have fairly good topsoil for the first 18 inches or so, and then it turns to clay. That's what my material was, it was just clay and it reminded me of the soil out on our project that we were looking at.

That's usually what happens if somebody's looking to change their landscape and they're looking for field dirt. It's not going to be the good topsoil that everybody wants, it's going to be something else. Folks might have to, like I mentioned, add compost or try to find some topsoil for a layer to go on top of it and then plant their turf on top of that. But well, again, like we said, we're still investigating, we're CSI-ing, it's not a crime[LAUGHTER].

It is a crime that your lawn disappears out from underneath you.

That's right. But we're still investigating it and we'll keep everybody posted as we go. Tom John, you had something on your mind today that you would like to talk about. What would you like to spend a little time chatting about?

There's a couple of things. When you sent that soil sample off for the turf, do they do

pH on that?

Yes, they will.

Very good, that's pretty important. It might be alkalinity, I just don't know. But anyway, I flowered two flats of tomatoes this year. I went and got the cheapest soil I could buy, garden soil, don't ever do that. Because the spores from this really cheap potting soil were mushrooms and I had more mushrooms than tomatoes. Since I'm not trained in mushroomology, I'm afraid to eat them.

Oh, yeah.

No. You don't eat them if you don't know what you're eating. But anyway, it was quite a deal. My tomatoes seem to be doing fine. I keep pulling the mushrooms. But don't use cheap potting soil because you get other things in there and it's not good.

When do you plan on planting them outside?

The end of May, sometime.

The end of May. Okay. Well, on Tuesday morning this week, it was 24 degrees at our house, so I'm very glad that we have a high tunnel. Went out and checked on things. I have a tomato poking up out of a sailor cap that now has blossoms on it.

[LAUGHTER]

That's great.

We'll see how well it survives.

A lot of people are getting, of course, the weather. Let's talk about the weather again, up and down and up and down. When you have an 81 or an 85-degree day, people want to plant that day or the next day. It's just like, man, this is still the first part of May, and we're susceptible to those overnight lows. I hooked up my water just to the couple of faucets and that's something that we're looking at every night before we go to bed, is do I have to unhook my faucet? So far, the overnight lows haven't quite that bad so the faucet has been continually hooked. But we want to grow some canna lilies and we want to put some elephant ear bulbs into the ground and I'm just telling my wife, it's just a little too early yet.

I think we've had such a cool spring this year, April was very cool. When we start getting these warm days, and everybody gets the itch or the bug to go plant something, and we're on the edge. It's just a little too early [LAUGHTER] for a lot of those outside things.

Jeff, I moved here in 1979 to work for the sugar company. I had 18 greenhouses. I worked as the Plant Science Supervisor and so I had a little place in one of the greenhouses with these huge benches, and I planted tomatoes in there and got everything going. But then I'd move them outside and they never did very well because of the cold nights, not cool nights, and so I [inaudible 00:12:59] in and I'm

thinking, I can't put tomatoes in really early on April.

1st of May.

Yeah, exactly. [LAUGHTER] What I did, I went ahead and put them in, and I'll be darned, that first year, I got away with it. I didn't freeze again, but it was just luck. So I did it again the next year and tomatoes don't like cold.

How many times did you replant?

[LAUGHTER] All of them, and I had caps on them and it was just too cold. It gets too cold for you.

Yeah. There are things that can be planted now. The cold crops, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, those types of things. But tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, they're just a little bit more sensitive to the cold and not ready to be outside on their own. Poor little buggers. [LAUGHTER]

Jerry is the onion guy, and did you plant your onions yet, Jerry?

I did. I got that taken care of just the other day and we use an onion plant. Now, the set is just the bulb, correct?

Right.

Yes.

We use a plant and I made my rows about only 10 inches apart, and then planted four rows and probably two bunches of Sweet Spanish onions, and I think probably about 60 plants or so.

Technically, would that plant be called a sturt?

It might be, a sturt.

It's a plant.

Onion plant. Yeah. [LAUGHTER] We're really excited about that. I saw that I had had some garlic that I had not picked and boy, they made a bunch of babies and so I decided, hey, if you're growing, I'm just going to let you grow, and we'll see what happens with that garlic that has come up yet this spring.

It's now mixed with your onions?

Well, I moved all over just a little bit. I have an iris bed and when you-all come out to pick me up, I wanted to have a little more time to do a little bit more of a tour. But I said, oh yeah, here's this, there's that, here's this. I was thinking, maybe next time, we do any sleuthing, or we could actually run a program on iris, and you guys could help me move some iris and take some iris home.

We could do that.

Yeah, that's good.

Although, I got to tell you, our flower beds are full of iris too, so [LAUGHTER] I don't need any more.

See, I was getting out of waiting having some help with my iris.

Oh, I understand that. [LAUGHTER] As long as you come to my house and do the same.

Absolutely. I'll bring a five-gallon bucket.

They have to be yellow.

They have to be yellow. I rototilled two rows for my onions and so created the bed, and then I had a five-gallon bucket there that I sat on and I struck the five-gallon bucket with my rototiller and backed away from it. Then later on, I was just going to go ahead and put some water on it so I had my five-gallon bucket there and had the hose. The striking of the bucket [OVERLAPPING] cracked my bucket and I went down in a heap. Now, thank God it was only from a five-gallon bucket hike, but still, see, that shakes you right up. [LAUGHTER]

Jerry, you were in the business of slips, trips, and falls, and [LAUGHTER] you need to be careful with that stuff. [LAUGHTER]

Every time you think you're being safe and you go, I've got a bucket to sit on, well, that's why they call them accidents.

That's one of life's lessons. [OVERLAPPING] Before you sit down, check your bucket.

Another life lesson, [LAUGHTER] and they seem to keep coming all the time, I tell you.

Do you learn more life lessons the older you get? Do more of those lessons show up as you get older?

I think so. I really do.

You pay attention more as you get older?

Well, I was out there in the garden just, oh, man, I got to get this done. No, I don't. I can spend all the time I want. [LAUGHTER] I was sitting on the ground when I was planting my onions and I sat back and looked around. I'm like, "well, over here, hey, look, there's some blooms on the flowering almond bush. Hey, look at that. Boy, I need to get after that a little bit." Then I started really enjoying planting my onions because you just had time. Now, the older I seem I get, the more questions I have. I just don't have any answers. [LAUGHTER] I have zero answers.

I thought you should have the answers as you get older.

You do what?

I thought you should have the answers as you get older.

Yeah. Well, to some things, just [OVERLAPPING] because they've done a repetitive thing, don't put your hand in the fire, that horseshoe is still hot. Stay away from the branding irons, all those things.

Tom John, do you have other things on your mind today?

I have the onion's question. I want to talk a little bit about my apricot trees. They're the dumbest tree I've ever seen. Every year, they bloom too early. [LAUGHTER] But this year, I think I'm going to have some apricots. Not a lot, but some of the blossoms are smarter than others, but it's really common. I use Jobe tree fruit spikes for fruit, and I don't know what chemical difference between the regular ones and the ones just for fruit trees. I take really good care of them. Jeff came over to look the other day and they seemed to be in pretty good health.

I meant to do a little more sleuthing there. I wanted to check and confirm the ooze spots that you had on the bark of those trees and just make sure that it wasn't anything to really worry about. The other thing that we did, well, your wife and I, Tom, looked at a couple of other trees in the neighborhood and one of them, give me a second, I got to think of the name, honey locust. For whatever reason, honey locust never comes to me when I need it. But honey locust tree in your neighborhood, unfortunately, it's in its last little bit of decline. We have an insect borer right now that is attacking these things, and what will happen then is that the woodpeckers will come in and try to get it the borers out. Also, happening on this tree was some squirrel damage. Squirrels had gone in and peeled the bark off so that's not helpful either. But that tree will eventually die and probably need to come out. [OVERLAPPING] Go ahead.

[NOISE] Todd had a question about those trees. He's going to plant where the apple trees are such the bark's coming off. He said, "When is the best time to plant a new tree? Then I said, I think it's early spring, but I'll check with you guys.

Yeah. Replacement trees could go in now, probably until the end of May would be the best time. You don't want it to be excessively hot, and if it's those cool days, will work best. Then if you wait too long, you might as well wait and plant things in September. But yeah.

Do the winter kill them if you plant them in the fall? You've got to be early fall?

They potentially can, and hopefully, our temperatures are cooling off in the fall and there should be enough time for them to get their roots established and they should be okay.

Great. Thank you.

Now, I say that, and I've got two trees in my yard that aren't looking so good and I'm

wondering if it was because we planted them in the fall. [LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHTER] Now having some of our other experts, really talked about mulching. We talked about if we run into a branch while we're mowing, some aggressive people have a tendency to saw that off.

It happens.

Some others have said, "You need to extend your mulch line. You have a mulch line, don't you Jerry?" I said, "No." [LAUGHTER] That might be an important thing to do for our young trees is produce a mulch rings on that area. We have a tendency not to do mulch rings. I have not done a mulch ring around my trees until just recently because, I don't know, just never did.

Because you might have learned something on our program?

I think so. [LAUGHTER] Now, I recall a friend of ours, Tom, John, and I were out at his house and he had grass growing right up to the base of the tree. Tom says, "Phil, you need to get that grass away from there," and he goes, "Why? Are the tree police going to come after me?" [LAUGHTER] Do you remember that, Tom?

I do remember that, yeah. I've always had a big ring because I don't want the grass and other weeds competing with my trees because I like trees a hell of a lot more than I like grass. Turf, it's okay. It's fun to investigate it, but I'd rather have trees.

I'd rather have shade than mow.

Yeah, exactly.

I'd rather have a little of both.

[LAUGHTER] Well, I'm a firm believer in creating beds for shrubbery and trees and turf just be turf. The primary reason for that is if you need to do a chemical treatment on your turf, the likelihood of you damaging your shrubs or your trees is less. Again, if you're mulching, you're keeping that soil moist and hopefully providing some protection for that tree.

I thought it would be a great idea to plant iris around my apple tree. I have done so, but now these little wisps of grass or tall grass, 18 inches tall, they're coming right up in between, and I'm going, gosh, dang, I may have to dig those iris back up again just so I can get them clean.

Well, Jerry, is it a crab apple or a picking apple?

It's a picking apple.

How do you avoid from damaging your irises when you're picking apples?

I don't, because usually the iris are done.

But do you step on them? Do you walk on them?

Yeah. Well, not so much. The base around the apple tree is only maybe three feet across and so you can reach through and most of the time the apples are out. I've had a few problems with my apple trees and the branches are such though that they come up and out. It's not a real tall tree, but it's up and out and I'm waiting for that seven-year bumper crop or [inaudible 00:24:29]

Which of the seven years?

five-year. [LAUGHTER] Which one has it? Well, I don't know if the tree is seven years old or not. Trum gave me an apple tree and it, unfortunately, passed away and-

Yeah, don't do that. I would like to report that we've talked about this on the program before. I have three plum trees that we planted when we first started occupying this property. 2007, 2008, 2009, around in there sometime, never a single blossom ever until this year. [LAUGHTER] How many years is that?

[LAUGHTER] I don't know, wasn't it 18 or something haven't been here for a while?

Something like that. I think last year I really threatened them, told them next year is the year if you don't produce anything I'm yanking you out. I think they got the message. I don't know why this year is any different than any other year, but they are absolutely loaded this year, so we'll see what happens.

Is a cost because they're missing a nutrient or something that would make them blossom set? I have no idea, I'm just curious.

Yeah, that's a really good question. We apply fertilizer to them every once in a while. I should admit this, have I ever done a soil sample around them? I don't believe so. They are on the downhill side of the ditch, so I think there's some sub-watering that they get along with ours.

[LAUGHTER] Maybe your plums are every 18 years?

Maybe so.

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] Bumper crop, you watch out.

There won't be any leaves on it, it'll just be fruit this year.

I'd like to say something about the birds this year have been fantastic. Of course, the goldfinches, they fly through here, they're traveling to the mountains, I believe, and they had been outstanding. I just love goldfinches and there's a really cool little bird called a downy woodpecker with a red stripe down its back and they have been absolutely outstanding. I even got a special feeder for them. It [inaudible 00:26:49] and they just wanted to have a look-out. Now the grackles are here and I'm buying birdseed every day. [LAUGHTER] No, I'm just kidding. The squirrels. Most people don't like squirrels, but they are outstanding, they hang upside down on my feeders and have a ball.

[LAUGHTER] When I was there with Jenan looking at your tree, there was a squirrel that was helping himself to his feeder.

They're pretty cool creatures. They're pretty destructive, but I don't care, heck.

No. Is it because they're destructive because they don't have anything to eat, or are they destructive because you've lured them in?

Well, it's that and then they scoop all the bird food around there. They are pigs, P-I-G.

[LAUGHTER] Those crackles are pigs as well. Some people don't like the crackles, and they say, "Well if you don't like the crackles, remove the feed for a while-

Ten days.

- a day or 10 days or so and they'll move on." But they seem to find it again anyway, and they're always looking up. My mom always wanted to know, "How come those things are always looking up?" [LAUGHTER] My thinking, maybe they are looking for birds of prey, the hawks and that thing. You don't see two or three or four of them always looking up at the sky. I think they're just being in the watch-outs.

Well, probably was seeing you guys. Amy told us the tree lady from [inaudible 00:28:33] to keep our feeders clean because there's diseases from the feeders. Do that, make sure you use a little Clorox, empty them out, and clean them out every once in a while. That's always a good thing.

I think it's time to take a little break, listen to our sponsors, and we'll be back after this. [MUSIC]

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All right, everybody, good morning again. This is Jeff Edwards and Jerry Erschabeck for the KGOS/KERM Lawn & Garden Program. Our guest today is Tom John McCreary, and we've been talking generalizations about yard calls. What other things that we talked about? Birds a little bit and tree issues. We probably ought to mention that since we talked about a yard call earlier, we may make ourselves available to do some of the yard calls in Goshen County. If you have concerns or issues and you would like us to visit, we could probably do that. If you would like to send me an email, my email address is J-E-D-W-A-R-D and the number four, @U-W-Y-O.edu. It's jedward4@uwyo.edu. Just outline what the problem is, where you live. If you've got questions for us, we can bring those forward on the air. What else guys?

[OVERLAPPING]

We enjoy this much as anybody. It's like when I was in agriculture, I was going out and trying to figure out what's going on with any crop, is way interesting for us as well as helping our customers.

Be prepared. We'll ask you a lot of questions. [LAUGHTER]

The three of us were sitting in this woman's office and each one of us had a different angle of what the particular question we had to ask pertinent to her situation.

[OVERLAPPING]

Where were you at nine o'clock on Friday night? [LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHTER] When someone else is considering another question for the person, I think it makes it more of a bigger, broader circle.

It's not a good cop, bad cop kind of conversation. We are all three thinking on different levels and trying to understand, and so there would be a lot of questions and things that we need to know in order to look at, to figure things out.

Perhaps we need to start a hit list on certain things.

The checklist of things?

The checklist. Make sure we talk about that particular problem for that particular individual.

Yeah. [OVERLAPPING]

We looked at the overall yard that day. She had some conifers, which are varying all year round, and then she had some shrubs and they were only 20-30 feet away from the effect of turf that was dying, and they seemed to be coming pretty well. Didn't you guys think so?

Yeah, I think so.

She had a flower platter with a tree sticking in the middle of it that was dead.

[OVERLAPPING]

She mentioned that she had replanted that tree about three times [BACKGROUND] in the same place. That's always useful information too.

Yeah. Bad times at Ridgemoor High.

Yeah, exactly. Again, we've mentioned before, if you want to call the radio station, they can direct you to my email address and we'll see what we can do to help folks.

Let's have a professional idea about how to plant grass. I've tilled up my ground and I've raked it just a little bit. You had suggested, Jeff, to obtain some oats. I went to Z&W Mill; very accommodating people. They set me up with some oats, and I have some tough turfgrass scene. Can you walk me through what I should do now?

[LAUGHTER] There's two different ways to consider this. You're planting from seed. There's different considerations for planting sod. Right?

Right.

The seedbed for grass has to be relatively firm for grass seed. I had a horticulturist who would tell me that if [BACKGROUND] you can poke your finger into it deeper than a quarter of an inch, it's too loose. So you would need to pack that down a little bit and then use your seeder, whether that's a wory type seeder or a drop seeder, or if you have a mechanical seeder, where you can drop seed and then it helps incorporate it. But then, I personally would rake some soil over the top of that. Then when you're watering it to get it started, you should probably water it lightly three times a day. First in the morning, right as things come up, then again at noon or one o'clock, and then again in the evening. What you're trying to do, to me, it's like germinating carrots. You have to keep them moist. You have to make sure that there are good soil seed contact, and if you can, keep them moist, keep them watered every day until they start germinating and then you can start cutting back on the frequency a little bit, but you still need to water it. That should assist you in getting a good stand of grass. Then, if you have weeds, you have to mow it at least twice before you can do any chemical control of your weeds. Otherwise, the grass is too tender and you could potentially kill the grass with a herbicide.

[OVERLAPPING] Jeff, another thing that I didn't know that oats was an annual, and the next year, the oats will be gone. But what it does is protect that seeding. It's a little bit fascinating to me. [OVERLAPPING]

Incorporating oats with your grass seed makes a little micro-climate for each one of those, or protects them because it'll germinate really fast. Oats do not like cold weather, they will freeze. As you're mowing throughout the course of the summer, you're not allowing those oats to go to the seed and they will winter kill, and then the next spring, you'll have a decent standard grass. The other thing too, after you seed, you can also lightly mulch with wheat straw. That'll help keep that micro-climate of moisture and everything going, and then it'll help things germinate. That's another way.

I've mulched with wheat straw before and I grew wheat. [LAUGHTER]

Yes. Expect to grow wheat. [LAUGHTER]

If you find that, hey, this oat doesn't look like the rest of the oats, it might be wheat, if you're doing a little mulch with straw. We were doing pumpkins, and I had one of my friends that would grind wheat and grind hay. I asked him to come by and he ground some wheat straw for me. All I really did was plant a lot of wheat.

Yeah. [LAUGHTER]

It sure brought in a lot of spiders and that sort of thing, so we had to go in and crawl and pull the weed out. That's when I first saw my spider with babies clung to her.

Oh, yeah. Don't freak out. [OVERLAPPING]

Oh, my gosh, that was scary. [LAUGHTER] I'm on my hands and knees underneath the pumpkin canopy and I run into that thing and I'm like going, "Holy. I won't tell Manna because she won't be pulling weed."

Yeah. Tom, you had a comment. What was that?

I think everybody's pretty aware of this, but don't wait too long on wheat because when it gets hot and you try to plant grass, it can be painful, because then you water it four or five times a day. You don't plant it very deeply. You rake it in and it won't come up if it's too hot. Early in the spring is good. [OVERLAPPING]

We mentioned, now's the time to plant trees. Now's the time to start planting grass, if that's what you want to do.

I'll go out and seed today. [LAUGHTER] Would you throw out the seed and then pack it down a little bit? Would you walk on it to pack it down?

Well, I think I would pack my seedbed prior to throwing my seed out and then rake over the top of it lightly.

Okay. That's what I'll do, and I'll report back next time we're with.

These are things that [LAUGHTER] have worked for me. These techniques have worked for me. It might not exactly work well for you. I really have a problem getting grass to grow as thick as I want it to be from seed. The place that we live at now, we seeded, we raked it in, we covered it with wheat straw, and it's taken about four years for me to say it's as thick as it needs to be. Last spring we aerated everything. I think that helped quite a bit. But in a program that I participated in a couple of weeks ago, that individual suggested a fall aeration and a fall fertilization, probably the best for your lawn. Maybe this fall, we'll aerate it again and see how that does.

Another thing that's interesting, Jeff, if you add more iron than nitrogen, it'll green your lawn up, but it won't grow so darn fast.

Right. You're exactly correct. Since we have high pH soils, it's not an iron deficiency in our soils, but the pH makes the iron unavailable to the plant. If your grass is not greening up like you think it should, maybe a dose of nitrogen isn't the thing that you need, maybe it's a little bit more iron. Tom John, like you said, it greens up in about 10 days, but you don't get this flush of new growth. So you are needing to mow it on a twice a week basis. [LAUGHTER]

Another thing I might suggest is Sulfur, because it lowers the pH and then your grass or any plant can take up the other nutrients, because you're putting the pH where it needs to be, which if I'm not wrong on this, I think it's 6.9 or 6.8.

Yeah. Round in there, 6.9-7.2.

Yeah.

Yeah.

If you can lower your pH with sulfur, that's a good thing, but it generally takes a lot of sulfur and it only lasts a year, and so you have to do it year after year after year.

Okay. Very good.

When you retry to put a bunch of sulfur down to try to evict our voles.

Did it work?

Voles, victory voles.

Yes.

I thought it helped. It pushed it over to my neighbor. [LAUGHTER] Then our next-door neighbor was developing the ground for storage sheds. When you're doing that thing in construction and the vibration and you're doing that on a daily basis, I think it drives voles to the outer perimeters and I don't know if you ever get rid of those voles, but we're trying to drive them to other perimeters.

Hey, you if you drive them to your neighbors that's okay.

Driving to the neighbors. We tried to use that with a heavy concentration of sulfur, and I'm not sure if it worked. But we felt like we were doing something.

Yeah. Yes, exactly.

I also [OVERLAPPING].

I'm looking at my notes. I wrote down a product that actually helps deter voles, and I cannot remember the name of it. I may or may not find it in my notes.

Oh, well. All right. Well, I'd be interested to learn that because we've had voles now for, well I don't know, the past 7, 10, 10 years at least. Sometimes you see them more so in the lawn and sometimes in the garden. I've stopped trying to irrigate in the garden just because of those voles. You lose all your water [LAUGHTER] when you're trying to put water down an irrigation ditch.

Yeah. Voles are very difficult to deter.

Deter. We have tried the trapping methods, have a couple of spring shanks down it. I have heard another guy that said that there's these gummy worm-looking things that you can put into the hole and they work pretty good.

That are a bait, yeah.

That's a poison bait.

Sorry, I can't find it now. We'll have to talk about voles some other time.

I'll bring it back up. [LAUGHTER] We used to have a cat that used to dig them and jump on them and sit on the grass. Myrna says, "Do we need to take a bowl of water out there for that cat?" [LAUGHTER] I said, "Maybe."

To wash the voles down.

Yeah.

I just bought a new trap that I'm interested in in controlling mice. Actually, it's something that sits on top of a five-gallon bucket and it has a little flipper lid. You bait it with peanut butter and they walk on top of this flipper and then drop into the bucket. I'll be reporting on how well that works.

They walk the plank.

They walk the plank.

Yeah. [LAUGHTER] I had a five-gallon bucket set on a water system I had at the office, and the water would run back down especially in the spring or especially for a fall application. Then I always had water in there and I check it every once in a while. I caught, I don't know, five or six mice out of that building. It's always good to have some deterrent.

Oh, yeah.

If the weather's changing, they either want in or they want out.

Left unchecked, they can be a problem very quickly.

Yeah. We've had some success with just plain old traps.

Right.

Notice that I had a bunch of flower seed in a box. Well, the box inside was moving, [LAUGHTER] so I set traps and gosh, then we caught about 15 or 20 of them rapidly.

Yeah, if there is a food source readily available, they will be there.

Yeah.

Unfortunately.

Unfortunately. It's the same thing with birds. That food source will attract more than just birds, and so Tom, we here at the Erschabeck house call them Jimmies. [LAUGHTER]

I thought squirrels were Jimmy.

Every squirrel is a Jimmy. [LAUGHTER].

All right. [inaudible 00:44:14] guys on our work for the university, we right across the street with Jacoby Golf Course. They were having trouble with their turf so we did studies on which was the best turf for that climate because [inaudible 00:44:28] 200 feet and it was interesting, the differences in different types of grasses. We just did research plots and kept them away from each other and it was fascinating. When you buy grass seed, make sure you buy good grass seed. It doesn't have to be expensive. Google it, find out which is the best.

Certified weed-free seed is going to be best if you can find it. Like Tom says, don't use the cheap potting soil. [LAUGHTER].

Yeah.

Don't use the cheap grass seed either. [LAUGHTER].

Same thing. I think that sometimes even the highway department uses seed that only has three percent cheatgrass. [LAUGHTER] I'm like [inaudible 00:45:21] isn't cheatgrass supposed to be a problematic grass and it's taking over the grassland?

You're going to need zero percent and some other things.

Yeah. Don't be blaming the highway department during phone call. [LAUGHTER] 575.

What is that purple flower that the highway department, beautiful. They do [inaudible 00:45:46] [OVERLAPPING].

Is that flax?

Possibly doing well. It's some batch, I don't know, I shouldn't say.

It's shorter than flax.

Yeah, it's a bit shorter.

Flax is pretty tall, and this other blue stuff is just an inch or two above the ground, maybe two inches.

It's really nice. I love it.

It's invasive though, because man, it grows like crazy.

It does spread.

Yes, they wouldn't plant it on purpose if it was invasive.

Okay. Well, it shows up in this field just to the North of me. [LAUGHTER] I think it just comes in on the wind and then it.

I think you're talking about the mustard that they don't plant intentionally. That is just a weed. [LAUGHTER].

Yeah, I think it is.

There's a yellow version and a purple version of that. That is not planted intentionally.

Well, I think the reason they plant it, you guys, is because it is short. It's not like a lot of other plants that grow and just prefer for keeping the roadway clear mostly on four-lane highways. That's a guess, I don't know that for sure. But it's too short and they don't have to mow as much.

We can't speculate. We got to know when we make comments.

Oh, okay. No more speculation. [LAUGHTER]

Tom [inaudible 00:47:01] your sister-in-law, came to our house one day and she says, "You know, I could turn you in for growing this teasel. It's an invasive species. Where did you get it?" I said, "I don't know, it just showed up." [LAUGHTER] "I'm giving you a warning." [LAUGHTER] I said, "Okay. I'm digging it up. I'm digging it up now."

Don't let her go to see.

But, those teasel, as we all know, boy, it produces a real pretty flower but at what cost?

Yeah.

It's really invasive and spreads like crazy like wildfire.

You guys, I planted milkweed this year. I went out, I do the confluence trail. I walk in and I got seed out there, and I planted it because of the butterflies. They really like it and they are in real trouble. Their population is dropping horribly, like 50 percent. If you get a chance, get some milkweed pods and plant them. I planted them in the house, they seem to be doing okay. Except, I planted them with the same crappy soil I used for [inaudible 00:48:08]. [OVERLAPPING] [LAUGHTER]

There might be a few mushrooms growing in them too. [LAUGHTER] Hey, I think it's about time to wrap up for the week. Jerry, do you know of things happening in the community that we need to talk about?

Well, yes, I do. I want to put a shout-out to all moms because it's Mother's Day. If your mom is still with us, give them the gift of time.

Yeah.

They don't want any flowers, they don't want any presents. Although, hey, who will say no to a present? But the gift of time. What do you want? Spend some time.

They do appreciate consumable things too.

Yes. [LAUGHTER]

As most all of us do. Yeah.

All right. That's what I've got going, and on the last note, I watched a video that you had sent me about grafting and I think it was grafting of grapevines.

Yes.

Send that to Tom. What an interesting piece of work that those people do.

Yeah, even though it was an Italian, it was still interesting. [LAUGHTER] Who cares?

Yeah, it's very interesting. You could tell exactly what they were doing and shipping wine grafts.

Wine grapes.

Grapes, that had been grafted.

Yeah.

Wine plants to other orchards.

Wait a minute, Jerry, there's no such thing as a wine plant. It's a grape plant. It's a grape [LAUGHTER].

Come on it's Mother's Day. [LAUGHTER] Give your mama wine plant. You can do that.

Give your mama for a wine plant.

Don't whine to your mom. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah, exactly. Okay. On that note, let's wrap things up for the week. We'll be back with you next Friday. I believe our guest will be Catherine Wisner, who is a horticulturist from the Cheyenne area, works for the University of Wyoming, and I'm sure that we'll be talking about gardening things. Looking forward to seeing you all there and you can hear us next week. [MUSIC]

You've been listening to Lawn and Garden with the University of Wyoming Extension specialist, Jeff Edwards and co-host Jerry Erschabeck. As the snow melts and the sun breaks, the University of Wyoming Extension has many upcoming virtual and hybrid learning programs available to you. Listen each week for details on new events and how to make your garden smash. Good day and happy gardening.