

This column features questions from Wyoming landowners submitted via the Web site. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards and Backyards!*

ask Sam



question

Sam,

We have a small acreage just a short distance southwest of Torrington. We are struggling to get a lawn of any kind to grow. We thought the grass we sowed last fall was going to be just fine this spring. It came up full and green with very few weeds, and it was really lush-looking for the most part. By June, large areas had yellowed, and now we cannot get it to do much of anything. We are so disappointed, AGAIN! We winterize each year and fertilize in the spring. Could there be some diseased roots or soil contaminates or something that is causing this? It is not the whole lawn, but the lawn that is green does not seem to spread to the yellow areas. When we first moved here (16 years ago), the lawn was fairly nice. A few years later, it winter killed and we have had problems with it since. Could you recommend a mixture of grass that would be best for our area? We have considered planting buffalograss so as to get the prairie feel, but it browns early as well. Do you believe we need to have the soil analyzed? Thank you in advance for any help or advice you can give us.

Dale and Kathy – Torrington, WY

Dale and Kathy,

I suspect you have a fungus acting on your grass this summer. Here is a link to several fact sheets on low-maintenance grasses for Wyoming and lawn diseases <http://plattecountyextension.com/ag/Hort/Lawn.html>.

Watering deeply and as infrequently as possible is the most important thing to do. This is best accomplished by monitoring the soil moisture because the amount of clay or sand in a soil can greatly affect the time between watering. Water the lawn until the soil is wet 8 inches deep, and then don't water again until the top 2-3 inches has dried out. Also, mow the grass high (2 1/2 to 3 inches), and water in the morning or day so the leaf blade doesn't remain wet too long. Funguses thrive under high relative humidities. To control fungus, reduce the length of time the grass is wet.

You can also apply a commercial lawn fungicide or try using a mixture of bleach and water. Use 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water and apply twice 10 days apart. Fungicides are only effective with a change in cultural practices (i.e. watering, mowing etc.)

Soil testing is an easy way to detect many problems before money is invested in an existing or new lawn. Soil testing information sheets can be obtained at any UW CES county office in Wyoming or online at www.uwyo.edu/renewableresources/soil/soil_lab.htm.

There is a \$20 fee for the standard test, which includes pH, salts, organic matter, phosphate-phosphorus, nitrate-nitrogen, lime and texture. There is a \$4 fee for additional tests. The lab can be reached at (307) 766-2135.

Hope this helps. If you need someone to look at the lawn, contact the Goshen County UW CES office at (307) 532-2436.

Sam

answer

As many in Wyoming can attest to the wildfire season this year has been severe. The Small Acreage Issue Team (the folks who bring you *Barnyards & Backyards*) have partnered with other concerned folks to assist landowners with information on post-fire recovery. So look for a newspaper insert on post-fire recovery which will be distributed in some copies of the *Casper Star Tribune* in early October. This publication will also be available through many of the agencies listed on page 3 and on our website at <http://www.barnyardsandbackyards.com/>. A workshop and other events where landowners can get information on post-fire recovery will also be listed on the website under "Events."