



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR once again. The days are getting shorter, there's a chill in the air, and lawn care business owners have the first chance in months to take a short, well-deserved break. Even so, there's still work to be done. The winter season is the ideal time to take a good, hard look at your operations and determine what's working – and what isn't – before heading into the spring season. Every expense or investment has an impact on your bottom line, and that includes the fertilizer you apply to your customers' lawns.

"It's a good idea to evaluate your fertilizer program every year based on fertilizer performance, turf needs, new research and available products," says Chris Derrick, field sales agronomist for Koch Turf & Ornamental (Koch). "Some typical signs of poor fertilizer performance include lack of adequate color and growth, which can lead to other problems such as weeds, diseases and insect damage."

Koch produces enhanced efficiency fertilizers (EEFs) that help lawn care businesses optimize plant and turfgrass performance with fewer resources. Fertilizer blends that contain higher percentages of these nutrient-rich EEFs offer better nutrition and less filler, which has little to no nutritional value. However, the benefits of EEFs extend far beyond turf appearance and health.

"While beautiful, healthy lawns are certainly important, green industry professionals should also evaluate their fertilizer performance from an economic perspective," Derrick adds. "It's no secret that lawn care businesses are facing many challenges today, and switching up your fertilizer program can lead to a number of economic advantages that can help alleviate those challenges."

LABOR SCARCITY. In the past few years, lawn care businesses across the U.S. have reported substantial growth; however, finding and retaining good employees continues to be a struggle. Because Koch's EEFs offer



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extended longevities, lawn care technicians can apply them fewer times annually and still get exceptional results. That means employees can visit more properties each day or spend their valuable time on other revenue-producing tasks.

"Furthermore, because their employees are spending less time handling heavy bags of fertilizers, businesses that choose to apply EEFs can reduce their risk of workplace injuries and the costs associated with lost productivity," Derrick says. "That also has a positive effect on overall morale and job satisfaction."

RESOURCE ALLOCATION. While purchasing a cheaper bag of fertilizer may seem like a good way to keep business expenses down, it can end up costing more in the long run. As a result, lawn care businesses must purchase, store, haul and apply more bags of fertilizer to their customers' lawns than if they were using a blend with EEFs and a higher nutrient analysis.

"Higher-quality fertilizer blends may

cost more per bag, but they end up being a far better value over time," Derrick says. "Because of their extended longevities, you can apply them fewer times per year, reducing your total fertilizer expense, fuel costs and the associated wear-and-tear on your equipment and vehicles."

Another benefit? Applying fertilizer fewer times per year allows lawn care technicians to focus more on other tasks, like pre- and post-emergent herbicide applications, leading to greater customer satisfaction and fewer call-backs to the site for spot weed treatments.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP. Protecting the quality of our air, water and soil is a responsibility we all share. For lawn care businesses, that responsibility includes understanding how to use fertilizers in the right way to optimize nutrient efficiency and minimize losses to the environment.

Koch's controlled-release, slow-release and stabilized nitrogen EEFs can reduce nitrogen loss to the environment and slow

its conversion to nitrate, optimizing plant uptake over a longer period of time. In fact, using EEFs can decrease nitrogen use by up to 40 percent when compared to conventional fertilizers like urea and ammonium sulfate.

"When applied at the right rate, at the right time and in the right place, EEFs provide solutions that contribute to environmental stewardship," Derrick explains. "From a business standpoint, knowing how to use nitrogen more responsibly can also be a key selling advantage when talking with current or potential customers."

From lowering total input costs to efficiently utilizing scarce labor and saving on equipment wear and tear, EEFs can enhance profitability and help you take your business to the next level. Doing the proper research and consulting with an agronomic expert to choose the best possible option can have positive effects that resonate throughout your entire operation. Ask your distributor about Koch's EEFs and discover the difference for yourself.