

## Mike's Total Lawn Care

### At a Glance

- Mike Immel, owner
- Located in mid-eastern Wisconsin, near Lake Winnebago
- Started business in 2004
- Solo operation serves 200 customers: 90% residential, 10% commercial
- Offers customers choice of 3-, 4- and 5-step programs

### Overview

With a customer base spanning over 30 miles, all in close proximity to Lake Winnebago, Mike Immel, owner of Mike's Total Lawn Care, feels an obligation to practice responsible, sustainable lawn care maintenance techniques.

His lawn care company provides weed control and fertilization programs, as well as aeration, overseeding and pest control. While competing companies may offer as many as eight steps in a full-service program, Mike stops at five. By practicing basic sustainable lawn care techniques, Mike has learned you can provide customers with a superior lawn in fewer steps.

### Challenge and Solution

After years of using a polymer coated, granular fertilizer, Mike was in the market for a reasonably priced, liquid fertilizer. "Most liquid fertilizers were way over two dollars per 1,000 square feet and that was something I couldn't afford," Mike explains.

While liquid fertilizers are often more expensive, they provide multiple benefits over granular. For Mike, a liquid spray application provided a long-lasting fertilization option for lawns less than 4,000 square feet. For smaller lawns and other tight areas, Mike can use a spray pack to reach areas that couldn't be accessed with his ride-on spreader. He also likes the ability to precisely apply around sidewalks, as to avoid getting granular prills on areas other than the customers' lawn.

Mike uses a ride-on spreader that enables him to fertilize and apply weed control simultaneously. Applicators who mix everything in one tank experience a significant time savings by making one pass for both fertilization and weed control. In addition, liquid fertilizers typically reach the root more quickly and don't need as much assistance from irrigation or rainfall





**UMAXX**  
STABILIZED NITROGEN FERTILIZER

to assist with getting into the soil and breaking down, which helps to minimize volatilization.

Mike's distributor, Reinders, recommended UMAXX from AGROTAIN International. In a nitrogen category all its own, UMAXX is a stabilized nitrogen product that maximizes nitrogen efficiency, controlling losses due to volatility, leaching and denitrification by holding nitrogen in the soil in a plant-usable form for when the plant needs it.

Mike did some additional Internet research and, liking what he saw, decided to try UMAXX in the spring of 2008.

"In terms of color, the results with UMAXX are as good or better than any poly-coated fertilizer," says Mike. "The added benefits are minimal shoot growth and long-lasting performance. In fact, when I first started using it, this area experienced an excessive amount of rain and I couldn't believe that it still carried over for 12 weeks."

To achieve the liquid results he was looking for, Mike melts UMAXX in a 200-gallon space saver tank he has in the back of his work truck. "When the tank is about half full, I'll pour the fertilizer in as the pump is running and it just melts down."

Mike also points out that the bulk of his fertilizer applications are still granular, which is another added benefit of switching to UMAXX. Because UMAXX can be applied through liquid spray application or spread granularly, Mike can fertilize whichever way the lawn requires.

Because UMAXX performs for 12 to 16 weeks, Mike can space his applications further apart, "I can get the same results in four or five trips that others get in six. That equates to time-savings for me, cost-savings for the customer and environmentally, I'm not burning as much gas to get the same results."

Being in close proximity to Lake Winnebago, Mike is definitely concerned about the environmental impact he is making on the area. "Leaching should be a concern for all applicators. I started using UMAXX when this area was seeing incredibly excessive amounts of rain and it still carried over for 12 weeks, so I know it wasn't leaching away. I was really impressed with that."

While Mike is impressed with the long-lasting performance and positive environmental impact of UMAXX, he is also quick to share details about the cost savings as well.

"I've learned that rates with UMAXX aren't quite as high as I need with other fertilizers. I can go three-quarters of a pound and still get the results I need. My costs using UMAXX are about one-half or one-third that of a standard liquid fertilizer and it's still a controlled release product."