

# Water management

Reduce turf stress and ensure efficient water usage. By Peter Hildebrandt

**E**fficient use of water can save money for a customer, as well as conserve water in the long run for everyone. Patriot Pest Control, Jacksonville, Fla., offers a water management product and service with two basic functions: increasing the time between irrigation cycles and helping stop problems associated with dry spots in the turf. "In our company, communication with the customer is our top priority," says Mark Nelson, owner of Patriot Pest.

"This doesn't mean they will act on the information we give them. I can't tell you how many times my doctor has told me to lose some weight and I haven't; a similar principle is operating here," he says.

"Anything I can do to create less stress on the turf will save me money in call backs and fertilizer. If the turf doesn't stress out, I can use lower rates of fertilizer," he says. "Reduced water, fertilizer and insecticide use is a dream come true for customers who want a greener program."

Dry spots weaken or kill turf, causing weed problems in those areas. Many times, Patriot Pest informs homeowners of the dry spots and they do nothing about it until it starts raining and weeds begin to come up. The customers will then typically fault the company, complaining that they didn't control the weeds. Though Patriot Pest does not offer turf or irrigation services, their water management services enable customers to effectively deal with water use restrictions.

"When customers are restricted to lawn watering two days a week, and June, July, August and September are extremely hot, two days per week isn't enough and a lawn will end up with a lot of dry spots," Nelson says. "If you can get them on your program before all that stuff happens, the lawn has less drought problems and drought damage."

Application rates can be on a quarterly basis or on a monthly basis. Usually, quarterly is the best way to go because even



in the wintertime, drought can cause dry spots on lawns.

Patriot Pest also offers certain services to people who like to do their own lawns. Soil testing and water management are the two biggest niches Nelson is trying to fill. He can make money on both – Nelson says profit margins from using the product are 80 percent – and it gets him in the door first when customers decide to switch to a full-time service. He offers applications in the summer time as part of his regular service and sells them as stand-alone applications. Often, the stand-alone applications turn into regular customers.

Nelson says the biggest thing with a water management service is that they help fill in during the slow parts of the year.

"But when you perform this service, it also gives you a chance to contact someone who may use your service in the future. At some point they'd rather have you do it for them," he says.

"Instead of flipping a customer over to another company, you are actually converting someone who is doing it themselves to your service. You get a regular customer. They also give you referrals. This opens up a whole chain of word-of-mouth. The green aspect of this product in how it can save

drinking water can also be a great sales tool," he says.

Nelson says he markets the service through his networking groups and current customers. The company that manufactures the water management product provides brochures to hand out, and a demonstration kit that shows the effectiveness of the product.

Nelson says to test the product out on a couple of willing customers before making a huge investment in it.

"Next, use the products on a couple of customers' lawns. Get their permission to use their lawns and document water usage," he says.

"I picked a couple with poor irrigation systems and dry spots. They do have to be willing to let you discuss the results with others and let you take before and after pictures. The results from these accounts will help you sell the service, and you will more than likely keep those difficult accounts."

In today's economy, people don't have time to do what they used to do, so if they can find one company without having to call 10 and having that many sales representatives show up, you can build up a rapport and have a better relationship with those people.

Nelson discovered the product while working for another company. He used it on his yard and noticed the difference immediately, and neighbors took notice.

"Right away it was advantageous for me to add this product to the lineup, especially for those who don't have a sprinkler system. This has been a great product for me and my customers, because I'm also able to make money off this product. You can notice a difference within the first two weeks of use.

"Directions must be followed and watering must be done as soon as the product is put down. Scheduling, calling and being sure someone is able to turn on the water ensures success." **L&L**

# Healthy Plants. Less Water.

**UNTREATED**

Daily wilt cycles and seasonal drought weaken plants' natural defenses and reduce the efficiency of fertilizer and pesticides.

Hydretain's unique action within the soil provides plants with supplemental moisture between rainfall or irrigation cycles— essential to maintaining plant health and improving the uptake of nutrients and control products.

By reducing the need for frequent irrigation, Hydretain reduces fungus and disease caused by overwatering.

Visit [hydretain.com](http://hydretain.com) or call us at 352-620-2020 to learn more.

## PLUS a New Revenue Opportunity!

**Hydretain**<sup>®</sup>  
ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

*With Hydretain, you will help your customers save water, reduce costs and avoid greenery loss due to drought stress and municipal watering restrictions.*

*Beyond just a product, the program combines the proven Hydretain technology with agronomic expertise, sales and marketing support, as well as 20 years of application experience.*

Sign up today and become a  
**Hydretain Pro Partner:**

- Free Introductory Hydretain Sales Kit
- Customizable Marketing Materials
- Ongoing Product Technical Support
- Professional Applicator Website Listing

[www.lawnandlandscape.com/readerservice](http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/readerservice) - #104

Helping you  
to **save** the  
**World's**  
**Water**<sup>®</sup>  
One Lawn at a Time

[www.hydretainadvantage.com](http://www.hydretainadvantage.com)