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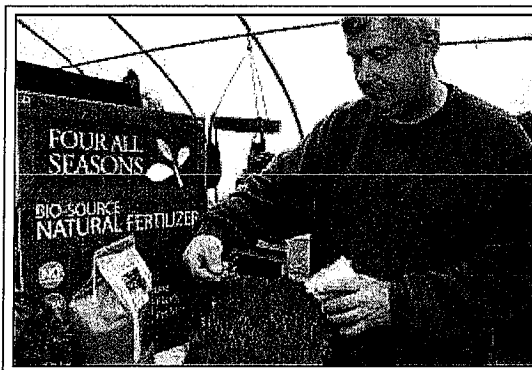
Mother Earth News

NEWS

Going Green

Natural fertilizer uses ethanol by-products By Darcy Dougherty Maulsby, Farm News Staff Writer

HOLSTEIN—Going green has become more than a grassroots fad, and Iowa entrepreneurs are tapping into this growing niche with Four All Seasons, a new multi-purpose, granular fertilizer made from ethanol by-products and other natural ingredients.



-Farm News photos by Darcy Dougherty Maulsby

Jack Hogue, a farmer from the Odebolt area who runs the Prairie Pedlar with his wife, Jane, likes the fact that Four All Seasons all-natural fertilizer is made from ag products like dried distillers grains and soy meal.

"Interest in this Iowa-made product has been incredible," said Delayne Johnson, 42, president of Four All Seasons, LLC, and general manager of Galva Holstein Ag, LLC. "Not only is this a natural fertilizer, but it allows us to support the Midwest, not the Middle East."

Johnson founded Four All Seasons to provide consumers with an alternative to petroleum-based products while adding value to Iowa's rural economy. The fertilizer is made from dry distillers grains and condensed corn distillers solubles, which are by-products of the ethanol manufacturing process.

No masks or protective equipment are required when applying Four All Seasons, which is available in two formulations, including 9-1-1 and 11-1-1. This slow-release fertilizer, which is sold in 5-, 30-, and 40-pound bags, can be used on lawns, vegetable gardens, flowerbeds, container plants and houseplants.

"It really does work, and it's a safe product that can be used around kids and pets," said Jack Hogue, a farmer from the Odebolt area who runs the Prairie Pedlar garden center with his wife, Jane. "As a farmer, I especially like the fact that Four All Seasons is made with ag products like dried distillers grains and soy meal."

Passing the test

Four All Seasons' low-phosphorus, slow-release formulation offers an



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environmentally-friendly option that's attracting more attention in light of recent legislation. Minnesota, for example, has placed statewide restrictions on the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers since 2005. The Minnesota Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer Law is based on the premise that most Minnesota lawns already have adequate soil levels of phosphorus, and that adding more through fertilizer is not needed, said Carl Rosen, a professor of soils and horticultural science at the University of Minnesota. Unnecessary phosphorus fertilizer use is a concern, since phosphorus is the primary nutrient that makes lakes and rivers green with algae and choked with excessive aquatic plant growth.

Lower phosphorus levels don't equate to lower performance with Four All Seasons. The fertilizer has performed well in turf grass trials at Iowa State University in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Unlike most four-step lawn care programs, only two applications of Four All Seasons (first in the spring and again in early fall) are needed for season-long nitrogen coverage, said Hogue, who noted that the fertilizer can be applied with a regular granular spreader.

Unlike other natural fertilizers, Four All Seasons contains no manure or associated odors, added Johnson, who noted that Four All Seasons is manufactured at a Hubbard Feeds plant in the Sioux City area and incorporates ethanol by-products from Quad County Corn Processors at Galva. The product has earned the praise of the City of Ames' Parks & Recreation Department.

"The product has worked very well for us," said Alan Thompson, who provided a testimonial for the Four All Seasons Web site (fourallseasons.net). "I especially like the fact that the product is environmentally-friendly so we don't have to be concerned about our volunteers being exposed to hazardous additives. We intend to incorporate the fertilizer as a regular part of our flower garden program and highly recommend it to others."

From tomatoes to sweet corn

Since Four All Seasons is a slow-release fertilizer that won't burn your lawn, don't be disappointed if your grass isn't immediately lush and green in the spring following the first application, Johnson said. Within a few weeks after application, the turf's response to the natural fertilizer is noticeable. Additionally, Four All Seasons' slow release formula provides continuous nutrition throughout the growing season. This will save time and money in the long run, said Johnson, who added that a strong, healthy root system also helps keep weeds at bay.

A growing number of Iowans are trying Four All Seasons in a variety of applications in 2008, from you-pick strawberry growers to farmers who raise vegetables for area farmers' markets. The product has already performed well with tomatoes and sweet corn, said Hogue, who has used Four All Seasons on roses, perennials and other plants at the Prairie Pedlar. In addition, Four All Seasons' 9-1-1 formulation poses no problems with reseeding annual flowers like zinnias, cleome and wildflowers.

"We're really excited about this product," said Jane Hogue at the Prairie Pedlar. "As farmers and gardeners, it's important to find new ways to help protect the environment."

Learn more

A 30-pound bag of Four All Seasons, which contains 2.7 pounds of pure nitrogen to cover 2,700 square feet, sells for \$24.95 at Galva Holstein Ag, LLC. The product is also available at many Fareway stores in western Iowa, Earl May in Sioux City, the Prairie Pedlar and a number of other locations. For a complete list of distributors, log onto www.fourallseasons.net, and click on the "Iowa distributors" link on the upper right corner of the homepage.

For more information on Four All Seasons, call (712) 830-1048 or e-mail jhogue@netins.net.

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