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way to grow

Fertilizer leads to great lawns, gardens

By Tim Gallagher
 Journal staff writer

HOLSTEIN, Iowa — Delayne Johnson smiles and says he could pour his Four All Seasons fertilizer in a bowl and eat them instead of Grape Nuts in the morning.

The statement comes with a mild disclaimer, the kind that asks people to refrain from trying this at home.

But his point remains: Four All Seasons All-Natural Fertilizers are marketed as "kid safe" and "pet safe."

"We call it a bio-source natural fertilizer," says Johnson, the general manager at Galva Holstein Ag, LLC., a business handling feed, energy and grain needs around Ida County and beyond.

"Everything in here can be eaten," he adds. "A woman showed up at the garden show in South Sioux City and told us her cat ate some of it. She wanted to know if she needed to be concerned."

Johnson's answer: "Not really. Chances are the cat has eaten some of it before."

Four All Seasons, however, isn't pet or human food. It's food for grasses, flowers and other plants. It comes from ingredients produced, in part, via the production of ethanol at the Quad County Corn Processors ethanol facility near Galva. The fertilizer, which is manufactured at Hubbard Feeds in Sioux City, features dry distiller grains, condensed corn distiller solubles, soybean meal and more.

The products (there are two types called 9-1-1 and 11-1-1) break down more slowly when compared to oil-based fertilizers. However, Johnson maintains homeowners need only two applications, once each spring and each fall for a green lawn and/or flower bed.

Residents need no flags or warning symbols on their green space once applied. Children and pets may run and play on the lawn as you apply Four All Seasons.

"This won't burn, either," says Johnson. "You can drop a cup of this on the grass and the grass will be OK."

A hit in Odebolt

Jack Hogue of the popular Prairie Pedlar of rural Odebolt, Iowa, tried Four All Seasons last summer on his seven-acre flower garden business site. Since his firm is open to the public from April through October, he and wife Jane wanted an all-natural product that boosted their colorful plants while allowing visitors to keep strolling through their grassy pathways.

"We were looking for a fertilizer product that was safe, nonstop, and environmentally sound, and Four Seasons is a winner," Hogue says.



In and out?

What's in Four All Seasons? Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron and calcium. What's not in Four All Seasons? Manure, petroleum and chemicals.

"The grassy pathways through our display gardens receive excess foot traffic in all sorts of weather, and we needed a slow-release fertilizer that would keep them looking great all season long."

Hogue was so excited about the product, he began marketing it himself.

Four All Seasons has also gained entry into local Fareway Stores, Mosher's Greenhouse, Earl May Nurseries and more. It is being used by several lawn-care pros in Le Mars, Orange City, Cherokee and Denison.

It's also on the Choose Iowa list of Iowa-based products and has been touted by former Gov. Tom Vilsack.

Johnson said the development wasn't easy, as his group put the product through three years of testing at Iowa State University. Two grants from the United States Department of Agriculture aided the process. Four All Seasons, which qualified for the grants due to its value-added status, has since received a 100 percent bio-based stamp from Iowa State.

That value-added component, Johnson says, is key to Four All Seasons. It's the reason, after all, the idea was conceived in 2004.

"We broker co-products (also known as by-products) from the Quad County Corn Processors ethanol plant and we want to add value to the corn and grains grown locally," says Johnson. "We are familiar with fertilizer and thought it might be an area to make use of our co-products."

To learn more about Four All Seasons Bio-Source Natural Fertilizers, call 1-800-548-5336 or see www.FourAllSeasons.net



Delayne Johnson, right, of Galva Holstein Ag, LLC, scoops from a sample of Four All Seasons Bio-Source Natural Fertilizer at his office in Holstein. The substance, manufactured in Sioux City, comes from co-products generated in the making of ethanol at the Quad County Corn Processors ethanol plant near Galva.

Grape hyacinth, top, at the Prairie Pedlar north of Odebolt was fertilized in 2007 by Four All Seasons. So were tulips, above, at the Prairie Pedlar. (Photos by Tim Gallagher)

