

## **Spread Corn Gluten to Prevent Weeds** **by Laureen Rama, Spring 2008**

As I write this, the dandelions are beautifully puffing white and going to seed. This is the perfect time to spread corn gluten meal to prevent those seeds from germinating and becoming new dandelions in your yard.

Processed from corn, corn gluten meal comes in the form of small granules that you can spread over your yard with a hand-held spreader or a fertilizer spreader. Corn gluten prevents weed seeds from sprouting and is most useful when applied in the spring before weed seeds germinate. You can also apply it in the fall for some effect in the spring. Corn gluten is usually available in the spring and fall at garden centres and organic grocery stores. If you have extra (often a bag will be enough for two applications), store it in a sealed container so that mice can't get at it.

According to Jim Ross of the Prairie Turfgrass Research Centre at Olds College in Olds, Alberta, corn gluten works well to prevent new weeds if the weeds that are already there are eradicated. (This means digging them out!) Ross says that 96% of new dandelions come from the spring seeds that disperse. Those seeds sprout within 2 to 3 weeks, so corn gluten is most effective when applied at the time that dandelions go white and fluffy. Corn gluten also acts as a mild fertilizer so it will stimulate the growth of your grass, which may require more mowing.

**Caution:** If you overseed new grass seed on your lawn, or are planting other seeds, do not put corn gluten in these seeded areas as it will prevent your seeds from sprouting. About a month after your seeds have sprouted, you can then spread corn gluten.

And you may be tempted to spread corn gluten in the park - don't do it! Some people are really allergic to corn and it's best not to expose them to it.

Laureen Rama is a Calgary landscaper specializing in design and installation of eco-friendly landscapes. She also has a service spraying actively aerated compost tea on yards (Eco-yards Spray). Her book *Eco-yards: Simple steps to earth-friendly landscapes* is available at booksellers and her web-site: [www.eco-yards.com](http://www.eco-yards.com).