

# GREEN LAWNS, THE GREEN WAY

## Environmental Lawn Care Fact Sheet

### Why choose to go the environmentally friendly way?



**Everyone knows the joys of having a lush, green lawn** - a soft spot to enjoy the sun, space for children to play and a healthy place for a variety of recreational pursuits. In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the harsh chemicals and expensive products used to achieve a green lawn. Ever increasing numbers of landowners, businesses and municipalities are now looking to natural techniques and solutions to keep their green spaces beautiful.

Environmentally friendly lawn care practices can be used to effectively deal with many common lawn problems. As an added bonus, these techniques save money and are safe for children, pets and the environment.

A lawn can become reliant on the use of conventional fertilizers and pesticides, which reduces its ability to defend itself. Environmental lawn care techniques work with the soil and organisms present to build a healthy lawn that can withstand the various stresses of weather, pests and use.

### Seven steps to follow each year for a healthy, natural lawn

#### In the spring...

**1. Thatching** - Remove dead grass from your lawn. Thatching is a great way to help aerate your lawn and can easily be done using a standard leaf rake.

**2. Aeration** - Aerating every couple of years is a great way to loosen soil to allow for more water and nutrients to enter the earth. This involves the use of an aerator that removes small plugs of earth from the topsoil layer.

**3. Apply compost to your lawn** - A thin layer of compost (or a top-dresser containing compost) will contribute to a healthy lawn by nourishing the grass and increasing the organic matter in your soil.

**4. Over seeding** - Over seeding will help create a thick and lush lawn and will also help choke out weeds. The thicker the grass, the less chance the weeds have to survive. Over seeding can also be done mid to late August.

#### Throughout the growing season...

**5. Don't cut it too short!** - When mowing your lawn, leave the grass at a length of 6 to 8 cm (2.5 to 3 inches). This will help keep out weeds, as well as shade the grass roots and keep the soil moist.

**6. "Grass-cycling"** - Leaving grass clippings on your lawn after mowing is a great way to fertilize your lawn, and it's free! Grass clippings are full of nutrients that promote healthy plant growth and increase organic matter levels in soil.

**7. Be wise about watering** - A healthy lawn requires only 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water a week. Using a rain gauge can help you determine when it is necessary to water. Each time you water your lawn, be sure to water deeply. This promotes deep root growth, and will prevent the grass from drying out during periods of drought.

*Helpful Hint* - After watering, use a garden trowel to check how deep the moisture has gone. The ideal is to water 10 to 15 cm (4 to 6 inches) deep.

# Environmentally Friendly Weed & Pest Control

**Pulling weeds** - This can be labour intensive work, but it will pay off. A vigilant weed puller will notice fewer weeds in their lawn over the years. New and improved tools (available at most hardware stores) can make this job a lot easier.

**Use corn gluten meal** - Corn gluten meal is a natural by-product of corn that is wet-milled. When spread on a lawn, it can prevent many common weeds from germinating and establishing in the soil. This is a natural substance that can be purchased at most garden centres.

**Home made remedies** - Simple solutions such as pouring boiling water or white vinegar on weeds have proven to be quite effective.

**Diatomaceous earth** - This dust contains microscopic, razor-like edges that injure insects, causing mortality. This type of pest control works well on insects such as aphids, earwigs and slugs.

**Nematodes** - These naturally occurring, microscopic, predatory worms are an effective way to kill grubs, leatherjackets, and other insects that can cause damage to your lawn. They are available at most garden centres.

## Additional Resources

### Ministry of Environment

For information on the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban and tips on healthy lawns and gardens, go to [www.additupontario.ca](http://www.additupontario.ca) or call 1.800.565.4923.

### Organic Landscape Alliance

Learn more about organic landscaping, gardening and lawn care at [www.organiclandscape.org](http://www.organiclandscape.org) or call 1.866.824.7685.

### A Homeowner's Guide to Organic Lawn Care

This online guide has a wide range of tips and tricks for a healthy, environmentally friendly lawn.

Go to [www.organiclawncare101.com](http://www.organiclawncare101.com).



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# Common Myths about Lawns

### Myth # 1: Clover is just another pesky weed!

Clover is a great plant to have in your lawn. It filters nitrogen from the air and fixes it into the soil, providing nutrients that help grass grow green and healthy. Clover often has white or pink flowers, which are beneficial to butterflies and bees who use them as a source of nectar.

### Myth # 2: Lawns need water everyday

A lawn does NOT need to be watered every day. Frequent, shallow watering contributes to poor lawn health by encouraging shallow root growth. Lawns with a shallow root system are more susceptible to pests, weeds, and drought conditions.

### Myth # 3: When it's brown, it's dead

This is not always the case. During periods of drought, grass will often turn golden, signifying it has gone into a dormant state. When favourable conditions return, the grass will usually turn green again.



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