

10 Essential Tips for a Natural Lawn



OUR MISSION

To create a broad-based coalition of non- and for-profit organizations committed to educating society about the benefits of organic lawn care and gardening, and affecting a quantum change in consumer and industry behavior.



For the most in depth lawn information, check out Paul Tukey's book, *The Organic Lawn Care Manual* wherever books are sold. For a signed copy, visit www.safelawns.org

- 1. Obtain a Soil Test** — Never spend money on any fertilizer or soil amendment without first consulting the results of a soil test first. Make certain your soil is deep enough, preferably 6 inches.
- 2. Grow the Right Grass** — The most common lawn grasses in North America, Kentucky bluegrass and Bermudagrass, also need the most water and fertilizer to grow well. Other species such as perennial ryegrass, fescue, seashore paspalum and centipede grass may be better for your region of the country.
- 3. Water Well** — Morning watering is always recommended so that the surface of the lawn dries off during the day. Water deeply and infrequently so the roots of the grass learn to grow down into the soil to get the water they need.
- 4. Think of Your Soil as Alive** — “Dirt” is what you track into your house. The material that grows your lawn, the soil, is alive with organisms large and small. Nurturing that life through proper use of natural materials will lead to a successful natural lawn.
- 5. Mow Properly** — Recycling your grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn will provide approximately half of your lawn's fertilizer needs for the season. Keep your mower blades sharp. Depending on the species — Bermudagrass and seashore paspalum are the exceptions — lawns should be mowed no lower than 2.5 inches, even higher in the summer.
- 6. Avoid Synthetic Materials** — Fertilizers manufactured in a laboratory often burn lawn grasses and soils. Fertilizers and soil amendments should come from materials that were once living plants or animals, or mined minerals such as lime or sulfur.
- 7. Add Compost** — Nature's most magical soil additive, compost, contains all sorts of beneficial microorganisms that add life to the soil. These organisms will interact with the organic fertilizers to provide the green lawn many of us covet. Compost in liquid form, known as compost tea or extract, should be used in combination with dry compost because the liquid form is available to the soil and grass more quickly. This is especially important during the years of transition from a synthetic system.
- 8. See Weeds as Messengers** — Weeds usually appear on lawns only when something is wrong with the soil. Even if we kill the weeds, they will come back unless we fix the underlying problem within the soil.
- 9. Similarly, See Insects as Messengers** — A rush of new grass growth caused by synthetic fertilizers will often attract insects. Predatory insects are rarely a problem in a natural system that is in balance.
- 10. Overseed Regularly** — In nature, all plants produce seed to reproduce themselves. In a lawn system, where we mow regularly, grass is not allowed to reproduce and even the healthiest plants get tired. By overseeding in spring or fall, you are introducing robust young plants that will fill in bare areas and compete aggressively against weeds.

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