

The Problem

“What goes on the ground goes into the Sound.” What we put on our lawns to make them grow has a direct impact on the health of Long Island Sound. High nitrogen fertilizers wash into nearby streams and



waterways, or pass through ground water, ending up in our rivers and ultimately in Long Island Sound. This in turn leads to excessive growth of underwater vegetation and to a condition known as hypoxia, in which low levels of oxygen cause fish to die.

Lawns fed a diet of **chemical fertilizers** become “addicted” to an unhealthy lifestyle. These fertilizers produce a quick flush of new green growth which then requires **frequent watering** and **pesticide applications** to survive. These lead to soil compaction and the loss of beneficial insects and organisms, which, in turn, leads to the need for even more chemical fertilizers. Thus the chemically addicted lawn becomes caught in a never-ending cycle. But there is a way to “cure” your lawn of its addiction and to help keep the Long

The Solution

Curing your lawn of its chemical addiction requires some simple changes. These start with moving away from the American icon of a manicured ‘green carpet’ to a more natural, diverse landscape in keeping with our rural New England heritage. Redefine “beautiful” to encompass more varied grasses and less “chemically-enhanced” plantings. The following techniques will help you move to a healthier, more natural lawn that actually requires less water and is less expensive to maintain.

Seeding

- Seed in spring or early fall with mixtures of fescues and ryegrasses.
- Reseed bald spots as necessary.
- Water seeded areas regularly.

“The best defense against weeds is a bag of seeds.”

Low Maintenance Options:

Mosses, dwarf thymes, dwarf sedums, clover (a natural fertilizer), yarrow (achillea), English daisy, wild violas, ajuga reptans, mazus reptans, and lotus plenus. They will help keep away unwanted pests and need less watering and mowing.



Mowing

- **Mow high** - to 3 to 4 inches. Taller blades of grass have more surface area exposed to the sun for photosynthesis, which promotes healthy root growth. Healthy roots can absorb more water and nutrients. Taller grass also helps suppress crabgrass and low weeds – better than pesticides can!
- **Keep blades sharp.** It’s best to use a mulching mower, and to vary mowing patterns.
- **Leave grass clippings on the ground.** They can provide up to half of the nutrient needs of grass and decompose quickly, thanks to earthworms and soil microorganisms. They do not contribute to thatch accumulation if you mow regularly.

Soil Testing

Soils can vary and pH/soil acidity is very important to your lawn’s ability to absorb nutrients. That is why it is important to have your soil tested before embarking on any fertilizing program.

You can have your soil tested at the Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station or at UConn. You can also do it yourself with a purchased kit. *See list of resources for more information.*



Once you have the results of this test, you will know if you need to apply lime to your soil, and what other nutrients are necessary for the health of your lawn.



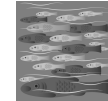
Fertilizing

Keeping grass clippings on the lawn adds nutrients and aids in water absorption and moisture retention. With the right equipment, you can even use your own ground up leaves. Mulch containing ground up leaves, grass clippings, pine needles and even shredded newspaper can be spread up to a depth of 1 inch as a natural fertilizer.

You may also add clean compost and, if you must use fertilizers, use organic ones that are low in nitrogen. Remember: “What goes on the ground goes into the Sound.”

TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

GreenScapes hopes to improve water quality in our rivers, ground water and the Long Island Sound by significantly reducing the use of pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers on our lawns and gardens. We invite homeowners to take the following pledge:



I pledge to make the switch to organic lawn care. To the best of my ability, I will follow the practices suggested in this brochure for a more natural lawn:

Name _____

Street _____

Town _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Check here if you’d like us to take a picture of your GreenScape lawn or garden.

Please tear off this pledge form and return to GreenScapes one of these ways:

- By email: info@greenscapesaction.org
- By mail: PO Box 422
Greens Farms, CT 06838
- In person: Earthplace
10 Woodside Lane
Westport, CT 06880

For more information
Please contact John Hartwell (216-1425) or
Jonathan Steinberg (722-7477)

The Greenscape Challenge

Co-sponsors:

- Earthplace
- The League of Women Voters of Westport
- The Partrick Open Space Alliance
- The Westport Garden Club

Supporters:

- The Town of Weston
- The Weston Conservation Commission
- The Westport Conservation Commission
- The Westport RTM Environment Committee

For information about these organizations, please check off the appropriate box:

Earthplace

The League of Women Voters of Westport

The Partrick Open Space Alliance

The Westport Garden Club

Watering

Water less frequently – but for longer duration. When you need to irrigate, make sure the water seeps deep into the ground. Deep water penetration helps roots grow deep into the soil, requiring less frequent watering. Early morning is the recommended time for watering. Lawns peak and look best in early spring and fall, and go dormant in the middle of summer. It is recommended not to waste water on grass during this time. A well-established lawn should not



need watering!

Weed Control

When beginning a GreenScapes lawn, you may notice weeds. It is safe to apply a corn gluten product (organic pre-emergent) in the spring and early fall. If there are just a few stubborn weeds that you want to remove in your driveway or sidewalk, the least toxic method of removal is to pour boiling water directly over them.



Insect Control

For grubs and sod webworms, apply beneficial nematodes. See resource list for more details.

For a list of home-made, low-impact remedies for a variety of pests, go to our website: www.greenscapesaction.org.



ALWAYS READ LABELS AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Resources:

To find out more about soil testing:

The Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station:
www.ct.gov/caes - click on Programs and Services

The University of Connecticut:

www.cag.uconn.edu/plsc - look under quick links

Other useful links:

The Northeast Organic Farming Association:

www.nofa.org

A Homeowner Guide to Organic Lawn Care:

www.organiclawncare101.com/

The Greenwich Audubon Society:

greenwich.audubon.org/Programs_AA.html

Organic Products

Fertilizers:

Agway, Bradfield, Chickity Doodoo, Espoma, Jonathan Green, Organica, Nature's Way, Ringer.

Pest Control:

•**Beneficial nematodes**, live microscopic organisms that can be applied to soil, are a natural control for many common garden insects. Available at garden centers and on line.

•**Borax** (sprayed solution for spot weed control and sprinkled powder for ants, termites and cockroaches)

•**Insecticidal Soap** for aphids, thrips, whiteflies, spider mites.

•**Marigolds** keep aphids away.

•Ladybugs, praying mantis, bees, spiders, bats, toads, birds, insectivorous snakes and beneficial soil organisms help control pests.

Some Gardening Tips

•Aerate your soil once in the spring

•Put lime down only if necessary

•Native plants are more bug resistant and need less water

•Mulching saves energy, water and weeding time. Hint: Mulch can be up to 1 inch of grass clippings, pine needles, buckwheat hulls, chopped leaves, straw and even newspaper.

GREENSCAPING



WHY YOU SHOULD STOP USING CHEMICALS ON YOUR LAWN & GARDEN

HOW TO MAKE THE TRANSITION SUCCESSFULLY

www.greenscapesaction.org

Underwritten by
Green Village Initiative