



Whether you choose to maintain your own property or have a professionally trained landscape contractor do the work for you, you can have peace of mind knowing that your lawn is a safe and healthy place for your family and pets.

Because the techniques and products used for natural lawn care can be different from those you may be accustomed to, we have prepared this guide to help you understand more about natural lawn care programs.

This brochure contains a few of the most frequently asked questions.

Thanks to recent advances in soil science, it's now possible to have a beautiful, lush lawn without the use of potentially harmful chemicals. In fact, natural lawn care is the fastest growing segment of the lawn care industry.

Grassroots Environmental Education, a non-profit organization, has been a leader in the field of natural lawn care since our founding in 2000. Since that time we have conducted scores of two-day training programs throughout the Northeast, where hundreds of private landscapers and institutional turf managers have learned the science and practice of natural lawn care.



Additional copies of this brochure
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A science-based non-profit organization

What You Can Expect From A Natural Lawn Care Program



*A Guide for
Homeowners*

Natural lawn care is based on developing and maintaining healthy soil biology.....

Q. What is natural lawn care?

A. Natural lawn care refers to the maintenance of lawns and gardens without high nitrogen fertilizers or synthetic chemical pesticides. Natural lawn care involves developing and maintaining healthy soil which, in turn, sustains turf grass, ornamentals and trees with a minimum of watering, weeding or pest control.

Q. What will I notice first about my natural lawn program?

A. The first thing your lawn professional will do is perform a soil test to determine the health of your soil and what kinds of nutrients or amendments it may need.

Once the soil test comes back from the lab, your lawn care professional may apply a surface application of one or more of the following: compost, compost tea, corn gluten, lime, organic fertilizer and a seaweed or kelp extract, depending on the needs of your soil. These soil amendments help develop the natural biology of the soil and will disappear in just a few days.

Most lawns will also require aeration to increase oxygen levels in the soil and provide direct access for moisture and nutrients to enter the soil profile. You may notice small holes in your lawn, or soil plugs on the surface. These will disappear in a few

days.

Q. Why are there pesticide warning flags on my property?

A. State regulations usually require that the commercial application of any product intended to control pests must be accompanied by warning signs. This regulation applies to natural products such as corn gluten, garlic barrier or compost tea.

Q. I like my grass cut really short. Is that a problem?

A. Yes! Healthy grass plants require a certain amount of leaf area for photosynthesis; cutting grass short deprives the plants of the leaf area they need to create and store energy. Taller blade length also provides shade to the roots, discourages weeds and keeps plants healthy by helping them retain moisture during droughts. Natural lawns are usually cut about three inches high. If you are planning a special outdoor event, talk with your landscaper; lawns can be cut shorter for brief periods if necessary.

Q. Why does my landscaper leave grass clippings on the lawn?

A. Lawn clippings provide a valuable source of nitrogen and should be left on the lawn whenever possible. Soil microbes will quickly break down the clippings, and they

will disappear in just a few days. Clippings can be removed for special occasions. Talk with your landscaper if you have an event planned.

Q. Will there be any weeds in my lawn?

A. Over the past fifty years consumers have been conditioned by advertising to believe that a weed-free, chemically maintained lawn is a healthy lawn. While it's possible to have a weed-free natural lawn, the fact is that most healthy lawns have at least a few weeds. Chemical pesticides eliminate weeds temporarily, but they always come back. For many families, the potential health risks of these chemical toxins, especially for children and pregnant women, outweigh the temporary aesthetic benefits.

Q. How do I know if my lawn care professional is properly trained?

A. Ask where and how your landscaper received his training. Programs run by NOFA, Grassroots Environmental Education and the Perfect Earth Project are generally recognized as *bona fide* organic training programs.

Prepared by
Grassroots Environmental Education