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Organic Lawn Care

By Hans Dekker

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Organic lawn care doesn't mean you sit back and watch as weeds infiltrate your lawn until dandelion lint covers your sidewalk. Nor does it mean that you need to be out on hands and knees from sunrise until sunset, hand-pulling crabgrass and invasive weeds in order to have the lush green carpet of your neighbors' chemically treated lawns. What organic lawn care does mean is that with a good lawn care plan and a minimum of work, you can have an attractive addition to your landscape that is safe for both your family and the environment.

In organic lawn care, as in all organic gardening, the foundation for building a great lawn is your soil. The first step in planning a lawn is to find out what kind of dirt is under your grass. A soil test, from your county extension agent or other lawn care professional, tells you whether it's sand or clay based, nutrient rich or nitrogen poor, acid or alkaline. From there, you can decide how to improve (amend) it and choose the seed that will give you more green for your colorful US dollar.

A basic rule of thumb in organic lawn care is that it's more important to feed the soil than to fertilize the grass. Nutrient rich soil holds moisture, entices beneficial insects, and maintains a healthy environment for microorganisms that fight disease, deters pests and parasites, and generally help keep your lawn growing and green. Six to ten inches of good top soil is worth its weight in green for your lawn!

A mulching mower solves two problems in organic lawn care with just a few swipes of its blades. First of all, when mowing, always keep a high clip (2 ½ to 3 inches) unless it's your final mowing in the fall. Short grass clippings and especially fine mulch from a mulching mower will fall in between the cut blades of grass and reach the soil where they quickly decay, adding nitrogen and other nutrients to your soil. Because grass is very efficient in its use of nitrogen, composting your lawn with grass clippings can radically cut down on your fertilization needs. Grass clippings alone can contribute up to two pounds of the two to six pounds per 1000 square feet that your lawn needs to stay healthy.

During dry seasons, an organic lawn care basic is to water your lawn infrequently but deeply. Deep watering forces grass roots down while over-watering allows them to remain near the top. Deeply rooted lawns better compete with invasive weeds.

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In addition to helping your lawn retain moisture, annual lawn aeration is one organic lawn care method of giving easy growing room to roots and provides circulation for the colonies of critters that tend your soil. The best time to aerate your lawn is in the spring. Not only will spring aeration break up the compaction of frost and snow accumulated during winter, spring rains also help aeration clumps decay quickly, further enriching your topsoil.

Hans is the owner and one of the editors of

Lawn Care Maintenance For Mere Mortals

By Dennis Conner

Though everyone likes to see their lawn in an enviable condition few are aware of the basics of lawn preparation and maintenance. Planting the seeds, spraying for the weeds, and watering your lawn, all look simple but proper maintenance of a good lawn is no simple task. To some, lawn care is serious business – reading every bit of the literature that they come across and going for a serious lawn building exercise that may make this interesting past time a rudimentary daily routine.

Lawn care and maintenance is more of an enjoyable past time rather than a core activity. Consider these basics of healthy lawn care. While talking about lawns the first thing to consider is mowing. The frequency of mowing, the growth of the grass, and the lawn mowers are all integral part in deciding a good mowing habit. Quite often small opening up of the soil leaving more space for the lawn to breathe would accelerate healthy growth of the grass. The lawn is to be sufficiently watered especially during large dry spells of summer to sustain the growth of the grass. Lawns need a good supplement of a proper mix of fertilizers with adequate nitrogen phosphate and potash.

If we go a bit technical, lawns require more than one annual feed. The feed for the summer need contain a nitrogen rich fertilizer where as an autumn feed should be rich in phosphate and potash with an adequate supplement of worm killers and disease resistance. For watering, the coolest time of the day, either in the morning or in the evening is advisable, the frequency being once a week.

A good lawn care management program includes proper weed control besides appropriate mowing and application of fertilizers. The basic mowing lesson includes use of sharp blades and regular mowing from March to October. Care should be taken not to move the mower backwards and forwards. In the case of new lawns, the first thing to be considered is to prepare a smooth and level ground by a tractor and box blade. As regards sowing the seeds they need spread in two directions preferably with a rotary spreader. The seeds are to be planted around thirty days in advance. Depending upon the temperature the seed suitable for hot season or for the cold spell may be selected. A healthy lawn requires more or less an inch of water during a week. Further aerating in spring is considered best for the lawns. The recent trend in the lawn care is the use of the organic fertilizers. These are environmental friendly and harmless to the plants. Literature on organic fertilizers is plentiful on the market. The cost of the organic fertilizers is almost the same that of the chemical fertilizers but the benefit stays longer.

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The type of lawn care depends on one's budget. One can afford to spend thousands of dollars should the lawn making is taken as a serious hobby. If, on the other, hand one needs a well maintained lawn to spend a few hours with family and friends the same may not cost much.

The author is a regular contributor to Everything Lawns

where

additional information about lawn care and lawn care products is available.



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