

A 'green' lawn is good for the environment

Weekend warriors will do whatever's necessary to make sure their lawns are cut, manicured and without a weed in sight. Look out dandelions — you don't have a chance.

However, in their quests to achieve rolling hills of green, homeowners may participate in some lawn-care techniques that are not so "green" or, in other words, healthy for the environment. This includes an abundant use of pesticides and powered lawn equipment.

Rest assured that you don't need to give up your gardening hobby or quest to have the best lawn on the street. There are ways to enjoy a beautiful and healthy lawn and landscape without having a negative impact on the neighborhood and other surroundings. Here are some ideas.

Organic feeding— Rather than purchasing chemical-based foods and fertilizers, look to all-natural sources. A compost heap can generate important nutrients for your lawn and plants and can be created simply from lawn clippings, raked leaves and the uneaten scraps from your kitchen — like fruit rinds, eggshells and leftover coffee grounds.

Watch watering — Rather than dousing your landscape with water and risking wasting more than is necessary, consider underground irrigation systems or hoses that are specially designed to water lawns and plants at the root level. Some systems operate on a timer and water in the early morning or early evening hours when the water will have maximum potential to benefit the

lawn. Otherwise, you could be watering for naught — with the powerful rays of the sun evaporating the water, or worse, reflecting off of water drops and puddles and scorching your lawn.

Limit pesticide use— Or even better, look for products that boast organic properties or safe-for-the-environment disclaimers. Don't overlook the benefits of insects and animals that can actually be of assistance. Butterflies, worms, birds and even some beetles can consume harmful "bugs" like aphids, mites and other leaf eaters. Even bats are good to have around, as these evening hunters eat thousands of biting flies, gnats and mosquitoes, pests that can make outdoor entertaining a nightmare.

Choose the right seed mix— Consult with your local nursery or garden center for the types of grass seed best suited for your region. Also, learn how to enrich the soil for optimal growth. A lawn that has a better chance of surviving and flourishing naturally, without the need for an abundance of fertilizers or weed killers, will be environmentally sound.

The proper cut— Cutting your grass too short leaves it susceptible to disease, insects and drought. That is why it's important to cut it to the right height. Your local nursery can advise you on this, or consult the bag of grass seed for more advice. If your lawn is too long, cut it in two stages to get it to the proper height so you won't risk shocking the lawn.

With some simple techniques, you can ensure that your lawn is beautiful and environmentally friendly as well.

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