

# Home & Garden

## Organisms important part of yard

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organic matter, and they require oxygen for growth.

Some types attach themselves to the roots of plants and fix nitrogen from the air into a solid form that the plant can use.

The life span of a single bacterium is only a few hours and the bodies are continuously in the process of decay, releasing fixed ammonium and nitrates for the use of the host plant. Other forms of bacteria live freely in the soil and trap the nitrogen so it becomes available to plants.

Fungi are second only in population numbers to bacteria in the soil, at about 10,000 to 2 million per spoonful of soil.

Fungi are useful in the soil because they break down some resistant soil components, as well as sugars, starches and proteins.

Dead fungi add to the soil's organic matter.

Molds and actinomycetes both decompose organic matter — actinomycetes are also used in the manufacture in many kinds of antibiotics.

Algae are present in the water and the soil. They add organic matter to the soil and some can even fix nitrogen from the atmosphere.

These organisms are born, eat, expel waste, die and decompose, all within the soil.

Those that burrow through the soil profile are constantly bringing up useful materials for plant life and aerating soil in the process.

Others make the soil nutrients more available to the higher plants.

Healthy plants growing on the surface of the lawn are also an important part of the lawn's ecosystem.

Applying either organic or manufactured fertilizers, following the directions on the label, will provide the nutrients your lawn needs to grow at a healthy rate and to resist disease.

Those plants will return leaves, roots and clippings as valuable organic matter to the soil's ecosystem.

Plants, flora, and fauna will form an intricate part of the soil complex — the miracle of life that exists quietly beneath your feet.

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