



Organic Lawn Care Guide

An organic lawn care program works *with* nature, not against it. This gives the lawn just what it needs to be green and healthy, and more resistant to diseases and pests. This program is also safer for children, pets, and our aquifers – therefore our drinking water. In addition, it saves money in the long run, since it takes *less* fertilizer, pesticides, and fungicides overall.

FERTILIZING: When starting an organic program, fertilize your lawn at least two times a year: April and late September/early October. (A third fertilization, in June, can be added, if necessary). This program works best when other organic practices are followed that protect the microbial activity in the soil, and clippings are left on the lawn. (You will not see the hyper-fast green-up that occurs with water-soluble, granular chemical fertilizers. However, you *will* achieve a healthier, *sustainable* green - with patience). Fertilize with an organic slow release high nitrogen fertilizer.

TOPDRESSING: Early in the spring, and/or in the fall, spread compost on your lawn, one-half inch or less, and water in. Only apply when the weather is below 85 - 90 degrees. This practice amends the soil, improves drainage, boosts beneficial organisms, fights disease, decreases thatch, and helps hold in moisture. According to some sources, topdressing can reduce water requirements by 50%! Here's the formula to help you figure out how much you need:

$$\text{Length (in feet)} \times \text{Width (in feet)} \times \text{Depth (in inches, e.g. 0.5")} \div 324 = \# \text{ Cubic Yards}$$

It is best to aerate before topdressing to allow the compost to fall into the holes that have been created. This incorporates the compost more thoroughly through the soil profile. This is particularly important in compacted or heavy clay soils. Manual aerators are useful to help those foot-worn paths, but for an entire lawn renting a gas-powered aerator is easiest.

WATERING and MOWING: Deep watering means deeper roots, healthier grass, and more drought tolerance. For example, St. Augustine should be watered 1 to 1-1/2 inches every 5 days in the summer. The rest of the year, wait 7 days or longer. Check the watering system output using tuna fish cans or similar containers. Place containers across the yard, and time how long it takes to fill cans with 1 to 1-1/2 inches of water. That's how long to water each time. When mowing, remove no more than 1/3 of the grass blade height at a time. This avoids stress and also encourages a deeper root system. Keep mower blades sharp; ragged cuts invite more disease. Leave clippings on the lawn—they provide free fertilizer *and* organic matter!

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS: If you are trying to bring life back to a stressed, diseased, or tired lawn, or simply want to do the most to pamper your lawn, here are a few more steps to take. Spray your lawn with our **Aerobically-brewed Compost Tea** and it will supply beneficial microorganisms and soil enzymes for disease suppression and greater nutrient uptake. Spray a soil activator, which will *stimulate* the microbes and improve soil texture, permeability, and fertility. To control weeds, use **corn gluten** as a pre-emergent herbicide in mid January and mid September. To add iron and potassium, and to improve soil texture, apply an iron-rich mineral supplement. The most basic way over time to turn a poor soil into a “chocolate cake” texture, thereby making your lawn the healthiest it can be, apply compost once a year and a soil activator at least four times a year. Here's to greener pastures! *Enjoy!*