

# **5 Steps to an Environmentally Friendly Lawn**

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## **Mowing**

Mow your lawn with sharp blades to protect the grass blades from disease. Leave about 3 inches of length. This helps prevent weeds and disease, promotes a healthy root system and helps retain water. Leave grass clippings on the lawn for free natural nitrogen fertilizer. Mow in the morning or evening to prevent disease.

## **Watering**

The key is to water wisely or not at all. Over watering can be harmful to your lawn. Try the one inch rule. Most plants and lawns thrive with one inch of water per week. So if nature does not provide, water deeply once a week. This practice encourages deep roots which are able to survive drought. Frequent shallow watering creates shallow roots which then require more frequent watering. Water only at night or early AM. Water applied in the sun or on windy days is mostly lost to evaporation.

## **Fertilization and PH**

First, have your soil tested to determine the PH level and exactly which nutrients your soil might need. New England soil tends to be acidic because of Acid Rain. Lime and finished compost treatments balance the soil which helps your lawn absorb nutrients more effectively. Most lawns need much less fertilizer than companies would like you to think, and if your soil is not balanced no amount of fertilizer used will be absorbed into the roots of your grass or plants. The unabsorbed fertilizer then will leach through the soil into our groundwater or wash into storm drains and end up in our rivers and bays. We then have polluted bays and streams with algae overgrowth. Algae can deplete oxygen in the water which can kill fish and other marine life. If you know what your soil needs you can apply just those nutrients in the proper amounts. You will help your lawn and the environment.

## **Grass Seed**

Use 3 or more varieties of seed. Lawns with only one variety are more susceptible to disease and weeds. A good mix is 50% Blue Grass (very high maintenance when used alone), 40% Fescues and 10% Ryegrass. The best time to reseed is late August thru September.

## **Weed and Pest control**

Early detection is best. Deal with pests and weeds separately and on a spot basis only. *Avoid indiscriminant pesticide use.* Consider bird feeders and bat houses for natural pest control. Birds and bats eat millions of insects, which means less bugs to eat your lawn and plants. Less pesticide use promotes beneficial insects which also help control the bad bugs. Use the least toxic pesticide and weed control you can and only on the site affected.