

Taking Care of Your Lawn ...Naturally

Natural lawn care is looking after your lawn with nature in mind. It is easy to do and good for your lawn and the environment!



4 Simple Steps to Care for Your Lawn Naturally

1 Mow High, Mow Regularly and Leave the Clippings

Set mower height to 5 to 6 cm (2 to 2.5 inches). Cutting your lawn higher develops deeper roots and crowds out weeds. Long grass blades stay much stronger, prevent weeds from growing, shade the roots, prevent drying of the soil and encourage longer roots. If you allow your grass to get too tall, however, the grass itself can block both air and water from reaching the root system.

Never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf length at a time and keep your blades sharp. Dull blades tear grass, making it more susceptible to disease.

Leave clippings on the lawn. Grass clippings supply about 25% of your lawn's fertilizer needs thereby reducing the need for commercial fertilizer. This can be done with almost any mower—just remove the collection bag so clippings drop to the lawn. When grass is long or during wet periods, it is better to compost the clippings.

2 Water Deeply, but Infrequently

Lawns need about 2.5 cm (1 inch) of water every 7 days to grow strong, deep roots. Put a can under the sprinkler to time how long it takes for 2.5 cm to accumulate. If it rains during the week, reduce your watering accordingly. The best time to water is early morning (before 8:00 a.m.). When grass has developed deep roots, it will be able to survive much better during dry periods.

3 Control Weeds and Insects Organically

A healthy lawn will out compete most weeds. Remove weeds by hand or by organic means (see other side for ideas). Bare areas attract weeds so apply topsoil and grass seed.

4 Use Compost to Fertilize

Compost releases nutrients into the soil and creates space for air and water, allowing for good root penetration. Apply evenly to lawn.

Pesticide and Herbicide Alternatives

The most important way to prevent weeds is to create a healthy lawn.
A healthy, well-cared for lawn will choke out the weeds...naturally.

- **Reduce bare spots and overseed.** Bare spots invite weed invasion. Thick, healthy grass will prevent weeds. To seed an existing lawn or to fill in bare spots, loosen soil, spread compost, sprinkle grass seeds, tap in with flat part of rake head and water. Keep area from drying out until seed sprouts are established.
- **Mow.** The sensitive growing part for grass is near the soil, but the sensitive growing part for weeds is generally near the top. Mowing helps weaken weeds.
- **Remove weeds by hand.** For best results, take as much of the root as possible.
- **Pesticides and Herbicides.** Try natural pesticides and herbicides and look for words such as “organic” and biodegradable” when purchasing pesticides. Remember to use all pesticides and herbicides sparingly and with caution.

Thinking about reducing your lawn? Try these ideas:



***BEFORE:** yard with high maintenance lawn and “thirsty” shrubs.*



***AFTER:** Grass and shrubs replaced with drought-tolerant plants and paving stones.*

- ✓ Expand your home’s living space - outdoors! Build decks or patios or expand existing ones. Paving stones and pathways also add character to your yard.
- ✓ Use mulch. Put wood or bark mulch around trees and shrubs. Mulch holds moisture much more efficiently than grass, provides nutrients to soil and can add unique texture to your landscaping. Fallen leaves add organic material to your soil. Instead of bagging all your fallen leaves, pile them up over the winter and add to your soil in the spring. You’ll be surprised at the results.
- ✓ Consider ground cover rather than grass for low-traffic areas. It is important to find a ground cover that suits the site. For example, shady sites will not support a plant that requires full sunlight. Talk to your local nursery about the right ground cover for your yard. Some ground covers, such as Elfin Thyme (*Thymus praecox ‘Elfin’*) tolerate foot traffic and thrive in the hot Okanagan weather. Elfin Thyme is soft, fragrant and lush.
- ✓ Try replacing an area of your lawn with drought-tolerant plants. Once established, drought-tolerant plants require little water or maintenance and can be very beautiful. See the example to the left of a local home—before planting with drought-tolerant plants and after.

Check out this web site
for more great ideas:

www.summerlandornamentalgardens.org

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Questions?
Call the Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen at

492-0237 or toll free at 1-877-610-3737.
Check out our web site at www.rdos.bc.ca

