

~ Monthly Organic Lawn Care Tips ~

JANUARY

- Consider dormant seeding your lawn. This seeding method can be quite successful as the freeze and thaw cycles of winter pull seeds into the soil, increasing spring germination
- Be a responsible dog owner and scoop the poop. Pet waste pathogens, like e-coli, end up in rivers and streams even during a January thaw.

Did you know?

When the ground does not freeze completely, grass continues to grow even under a blanket of snow.

FEBRUARY

- Start planning for spring by visiting home and garden shows, great places to look into new products and new ideas.
- Consider reducing the size of your lawn. Start planning to add a rain garden, wildflower meadow, vegetable garden or outdoor entertaining area.
- Get your lawn mower ready for the busy season ahead:
 - ✓ Sharpen mower blades (clean cuts prevent grass disease)
 - ✓ Clean spark plugs and replace if necessary
 - ✓ Clean the deck
 - ✓ Set blades to proper height (3-4")

Did you know?

For every 3 inches of snow the soil temperature increases 1 degree. More snow leads to warmer soils and an earlier planting season.

MARCH

- Lightly rake the lawn to remove compacted grass and snow mold caused by excess moisture.
- Cut grass 3-3.5 inches and be sure to bag the first cut (in case of snow mold). Subsequent clippings should be left on the lawn (i.e. grasscycling) with a mulching mower or attachment.
- Every 3 years, soil test in spring (or late fall) to determine what nutrients need to be added to the soil. Testing saves money and time and prevents over application of nutrients.

Did you know?

Don't leave grass clippings on your driveway and other hard surfaces. They wash into streams and rivers, blocking water flow and adding unwanted nutrients. Aim your mower so grass clippings stay on the lawn where nutrients are needed.

APRIL

- Continue to cut grass at 3-3.5" high and leave the clippings
- Avoid mowing when grass is wet to reduce compaction.
- If soil test results indicate the need, amend your soil with organic products.

- Tolerate some weeds in your yard; they are not the enemy. Plant biodiversity in your lawn provides food for pollinators and beneficial soil organisms. If you must remove weeds try these non-synthetic chemical approaches:
 - Apply corn gluten meal to prevent annual weed seeds from germinating
 - Spot treat existing weeds with an organic weed control product that contains molasses or liquid iron
 - Hand-pull weeds. Purchase a tool to help, like a Speedy Weedy, or encourage your children to pull!

Did You Know?

Beneficial nematodes do more than control grubs? They are also effective on flea and tick larvae, helping keep your pets free of these pests.

MAY

- Mow high at 3-4 inches and continue to let clippings lie. Save money, time, and prevent over application of nutrients by letting the grass clippings add nitrogen to the soil as nature's fertilizer.
- Don't mulch or compost clippings with annual weed seed heads. Instead, bag it up and dispose of in the trash to prevent more weeds being introduced to your lawn.
- Continue to hand pull or spot treat weeds with an organic weed control spray.
- If Japanese beetle grubs are an issue and soil conditions are right, apply Milky Spore to control the population. One application lasts for 10 years.
- Reduce or eliminate pesticides to protect children and animals.

Did you know?

Studies show mowing your lawn to a height of 4 inches prevents crabgrass as effectively as a chemical herbicide.

JUNE

- Brown-yellow dormant grass is normal during summer's heat. If you require a green lawn during this time water deeply, 1 inch of water 2 times a week
- Relieve lawn stress by applying gentle, slow fertilizers like compost, compost tea or sea kelp. Synthetic, chemical, high-nutrient fertilizers increase stress on lawns.
- Read the weeds for a healthy lawn. Every weed tells a story and gives clues about lawn conditions. Learn to identify weeds and react accordingly.

Did You Know?

Dandelions are not native to North America. Early European colonists brought dandelions over as a source of food and medicine. Dandelion greens are highly nutritious: containing more Vitamin A, K, Calcium and Iron than broccoli per 1 cup serving

JULY

- Learn to identify good & bad bugs. Many beneficial insects visit yards and should be left alone. Beneficial bugs feed on common pests. Find a strategy to foster healthy, balanced garden ecology.

- Download an app or purchase a garden insect guide
- Control pests with natural oils like neem and garlic. Only use neem oil when necessary, it is a natural broad spectrum insecticide that kills beneficial insects too.
- Sharp mower blades = Happy grass blades. By mid-summer mower blades have dulled, this causes stress to the lawn. Consider raising the mower deck to 4-4.5”.

Did You Know?

Adding organic matter to the soil, like compost or compost tea, relieves stress and feeds beneficial soil microbes. University studies have shown that a healthy microbe population will out compete most of the pathogens that cause fungal diseases in the lawn.

AUGUST

- Over seed the lawn; slice seeding is the most effective way to seed a lawn.
- When choosing grass seed consider turf type tall fescue, best suited for Ohio’s climate.
- Mow only when needed.

Did You Know?

A small percentage of weeds in the lawn is a good thing. Weeds increase biodiversity and attract beneficial insects. Biodiversity leads to a reduced likelihood of pest insects and diseases.

SEPTEMBER

- Aerate to introduce oxygen and reduce the incidence of thatch in the lawn. Both mechanical (core) and biological (liquid) methods are effective.
- Lawn seeding can be done until the end of the month. Be sure seed is in direct contact with the soil for best germination. Apply a thin layer of compost after seeding.
- If you aren’t seeding your lawn this fall, apply corn gluten meal to thwart fall weed seeds.
- Continue to mow high at 3 or 4 inches.
- Monitor for grubs and animal activity; skunks dig to find grubs.

Did You Know?

Up to 6 million birds die each year as a direct result of exposure to lawn care chemicals. Be a friend to the birds and use less chemicals.

OCTOBER

- Early in the month, consider a fall fertilizer with organic products.
- Mulch leaves with a lawn mower. Leaves provide nutrients for healthy soil, more of nature’s fertilizer.

Did you Know?

Researchers found that mulching leaves in the fall resulted in a greener lawn and up to 80% less dandelions the following spring.

NOVEMBER

- Fall is the best time to feed the lawn. Amend the soil according to the soil test results.
- Every 3 years, soil test in late fall (or spring) to determine what nutrients need to be added to the soil. Testing can save money, time and prevent over application of nutrients. Kits can be found at local Soil and Water Conservation District or Cooperative Extension offices.
- Continue mulching leaves. Cut the leaves smaller by mowing more than once with your mower or add leaves to your compost pile.

Did You Know?

Grass clippings left on lawn do not cause thatch. Nitrogen rich grass clippings are 80-90 percent water and break down quickly to feed the soil.

DECEMBER

- Research environmentally friendly ice melt products.
- Drain gas from lawn mower for winter storage, clean equipment and put away.

Did you Know?

Ho Ho Hold the salt! Excess salt applied to icy sidewalks and roads negatively impacts the health of streams, rivers and your lawn.