

Be a Lawn Steward

Tips for Creating a Healthy, Sustainable Lawn



-  **Take a Soil Test** - Eliminate the guess work and find out exactly what your lawn needs. Think of it as a prescription for your lawn.
-  **Increase Organic Matter** - Increasing the soil's organic matter improves its water holding capacity and recycles nutrients for plant use. Don't bag your grass clippings and consider topdressing your lawn with compost to increase the amount of organic matter in your soil.
-  **Mow Higher** - Mowing too short causes your grass to develop shallow root systems susceptible to drought. Setting your mower deck at 3 ½-4 inches allows plants to develop deeper roots, shades out weeds, and prevents water loss through evaporation.
-  **Overseeding** - A thick lawn will crowd out competing weeds. Overseed cool season grasses such as fescue and Kentucky bluegrass in the fall followed by light watering until established.
-  **Reduce Compaction** - This fall, aerate your lawn to allow air, water and fertilizer to infiltrate your soil. Consider aerating prior to overseeding for better seed to soil contact.
-  **Be Water Wise** - If you must irrigate, water in the morning and water deep (1-1.5 inches of water a week) to avoid diseases and help your lawn develop deeper roots. If you have an automated system, install a rain sensor that prevents your system from operating during or immediately after a rain event.
-  **Embrace Diversity** - Certain "weeds" can actually be beneficial to your lawn. For example, clover takes nitrogen from the air and makes it available to your preferred grasses, improving your lawn's overall health.
-  **Read Your Weeds** - Weeds thrive in poor soil and can tell you a lot about what steps to take to improve growing conditions. For example, compacted soils usually host weeds such as crabgrass & knotweed. Consider aerating to alleviate compaction, followed by overseeding to thicken turf grass and suppress future weed competition.
-  **Reduce Pesticide Use** - Herbicides and insecticides are quick, temporary fixes harmful to the many small organisms essential to developing & maintaining healthy soils. Focus on getting to the root of the problem by improving soil fertility & adjusting cultural practices to eliminate problems within your lawn.
-  **Maintain Your Equipment** - Properly maintained equipment runs more efficiently and lasts longer, saving you time and money. Perform routine checks of your equipment throughout the growing season. During the colder weather months, sharpen blades, change oil and filters.
-  **Create Wildlife Habitat** - Monocultures, like lawns and crop fields, do not occur in a natural setting and act as a "biological dessert" for wildlife which rely on diversity to survive. Add native plants to your landscape to create habitat, beauty, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

