

What can you do?

Make the pledge.

Buy and proudly display your ladybug sign.

Switch to Organic lawn care practices.

Talk to your friends and neighbors about pesticides.

What are pesticides?

WEED N FEED, GRUB CONTROL, WEED KILLER, FUNGUS TREATMENT, INSECT SPRAY, CRAB GRASS PREVENTER, INSECTICIDES, HERBICIDES

Resources

Pesticide Free Zone, [buy your sign direct](http://www.pesticidefreezone.org/)
<http://www.pesticidefreezone.org/>

Lawn Care: Pesticide Hazards and Alternatives
<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/index.htm>

A Homeowner's Guide to Organic Lawn Care
<http://www.organiclawncare101.com/>

Pesticide Action Network, detailed pesticide information
<http://www.panna.org/issues/pesticides-101-primer>

Brochure designed and compiled by Nisha K., volunteer.



Make your yard PESTICIDE FREE

Why Pesticide Free?

Pesticides are toxic to human health and the environment. It is illegal to claim that any pesticide is "safe" even when used as directed.

Government regulations do little to protect the consumer. Labels are not required to carry information about chronic or long-term effects. Even after a pesticide is proven to be highly toxic, it takes many years to phase it out.

Lawn pesticides can increase the risk of many diseases, such as several types of cancer, as well as asthma, immune system and nerve disorders, liver or kidney damage, infertility, birth defects, learning disabilities and behavioral problems.

Children are particularly vulnerable due to their size, rapid development, extra time spent outdoors, and hand to mouth behaviors. A National Cancer Institute report states that children are 6 times more likely to develop leukemia when lawn pesticides are used. In a recent study of preschoolers, 99% had one or more pesticides in their bodies.

Lawn pesticides can also poison pets and increase their risk of cancer.

Pesticides kill microorganisms in the soil, weakening plants so they are more vulnerable to pests and diseases. This creates a vicious cycle of chemical dependency.

Pesticides kill beneficial insects like pollinators that are crucial to our gardens and farms.

Pesticide runoff threatens the safety of our drinking water, and also harms marine organisms.

Pesticides get tracked indoors on your skin, clothes and shoes, contaminate homes.

Safe and effective alternatives to pesticides are widely available at lawn and garden centers.

SIMPLE STEPS TO ORGANIC LAWN CARE

The easiest, most cost effective way to a beautiful, healthy lawn is to work with nature, not against it. A healthy lawn needs nutrients and microbe-rich soil to develop deep rooted, dense turf that competes successfully with weeds. Dense turf is beautiful and low maintenance. It naturally resists drought, insects and diseases.

Pesticides are not necessary for a beautiful lawn. In fact, they can do more harm than good. They kill the microbial life necessary for healthy soil and can kill the pest's natural enemies. This invites disease and insect infestation, which leads to more pesticide use and traps you in an unhealthy, costly chemical cycle.

Basic lawn care tips:

- ❖ Feed the soil. Spread 1/4" compost each spring and fall.
- ❖ Feed the grass. Leave grass clippings on lawn as fertilizer. If needed, sprinkle organic fertilizer in the spring.
- ❖ Prevent weed germination. Apply Corn Gluten in the spring when Forsythia are just blooming. Note this will prevent grass also from germinating, so don't re-seed around that time.
- ❖ Mow high. No lower than 3", this shades roots, conserves moisture and keeps out weeds. Mow when needed, keep mower blades sharp, and rotate mowing patterns.
- ❖ Remove weeds. Dig out those dandelions if you must.
- ❖ Water less often but longer. No more than once a week, only when soil is dry 6" down. 1" water per watering.
- ❖ Overseed annually. Reseeding every fall with a mix of hardy indigenous grasses will create a thick turf and crowd out weeds.
- ❖ Aerate. This alleviates compaction, improves germination, and makes grass healthier.
- ❖ Control pests. Use organic controls like beneficial nematodes, milky spore powder, and compost "tea".

YEARLY SCHEDULE

March & April

- Sharpen mower blades. Raise blade to 3 inches.
- Test soil: Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County, <http://www.co.middlesex.nj.us/extensionervices/>
- Add soil amendments based on soil test.

- Re-seed bare patches, or apply corn gluten to prevent weed germination.
- Always leave clippings on lawn to fertilize.

May and June

- Check for weeds; pull out by hand.
- Re-seed bare spots.
- Monitor for insect pests.
- If you have grub damage, spot treat with milky spore (once every ten years) and/or with beneficial nematode worms (once yearly for 2 or 3 years).

August

- You may allow lawn to go dormant during drought. It will green up after rain.

September and October

- Best time to seed (generously).
- Fertilize if needed (sparingly) or top dress with ¼ inch compost.
- Aerate if soil is compacted.
- Lime if an autumn soil test finds pH lower than about 6.8.

November

- Final mowing at 2 inches for easier leaf raking.

Managing your lawn service

- **Refuse routine application** of pesticides.
- **Request corn gluten** and organic fertilizer instead of "Weed and Feed" products.
- **Ask for an organic program.** Be patient. An organic lawn can take up to 3 years to fully establish.
- **Cutting:** set mower 3" - 4", cut only when needed, leave clippings.
- **Never allow unidentified products** to be used on your lawn. Request safety information and read it before application. Look up toxicity at www.pesticide.org
- **Be aware** that chemicals listed as inert ingredients can be highly toxic.
- **Take note:** many pesticides persist in lawns and soil long after the posted 24-72 hours.