

Ten Ways to Have a *Green* Lawn

The National Wildlife Federation reports that:

- *30% of water used on the East Coast of the U.S. goes to watering lawns, 60% on the West Coast.*
- *18% of municipal solid waste is composed of yard waste.*
- *The average suburban lawn received 10 times as much chemical pesticide per acre as farmland.*
- *Over 70 million tons of fertilizers and pesticides are applied to residential lawns and gardens annually.*
- *Per hour of operation, a gas lawn mower emits 10 to 12 times as much hydrocarbon as a typical automobile. A weed eater emits 21 times more and a leaf blower 34 times more.*
- *Where pesticides are used, 60-90% of earthworms are killed. Earthworms are an important factor in the health of our soils.*

The costs of maintaining a typical lawn area in our country can be very high, both economically and environmentally. But luckily most of these costs can be avoided. Here are ten tips that will assist you in beautifying your lawn and garden area without heavily taxing our environment.

1) Replace your bluegrass lawn with a native, low maintenance lawn. There are several grass species that are native and highly adapted to the southwest's arid climate. Many of these grasses can produce a turf-type lawn while using less water and requiring less mowing. Come in to Durango Nursery and visit with one of our nursery professionals to find the best seed to suit your needs. We have a great selection in stock, both in bulk and pre-packaged.

2) Use an organic fertilizer on your existing lawn areas. An organic fertilizer will add nutrients both directly to the grass, and into your soils. Fertilize either once or twice a year, in the early fall and again the next spring. One of the excellent natural fertilizers we offer is Safer's All Natural Lawn Restore Fertilizer. We also offer all-purpose fertilizers that work well on lawns, such as Yum Yum Mix and Happy Frog All-Purpose Fertilizer.

3) Allow your lawn to grow longer between mowing. The shade of tall, dense grass will prevent light from reaching most weeds and will aid in the destruction of new weed seedlings.

4) When you mow, leave your lawn clippings on the lawn. The clippings will add organic matter and nutrients back into the soil. Lawn clippings make excellent organic compost for your lawn and garden areas.

- 5) Set the blade higher on your mower. Mowing higher has several benefits:
 - Longer grass shades the soil better, which leads to less needed water
 - Longer grass leads to deeper roots, which leads to less needed water
 - Longer grass leads to thicker turf, which leads to fewer weeds
 - Longer grass leads to slower growing grass, which leads to less mowing
- 6) Water early in the day or late in the evening. When the temperatures are cooler and the sun is less intense, less water is lost to evaporation.
- 7) Keep herbicide and pesticide applications to a minimum. Pesticides kill soil organisms that make the soil healthy. There are many safe and natural alternatives to chemical pesticides. Durango Nursery has many options for sale, and our nursery professionals are happy to assist you in making this important transition.
- 8) Observe the weeds in your lawn. Turf grasses generally prefer a soil pH between 6.5 and 7.0. Dandelions thrive at a pH level of 7.5. If your lawn has a lot of dandelions in it, try adding soil sulfur to lower the pH. Clover and medic weeds indicate a soil depleted of nitrogen. Add compost or nitrogen rich organic fertilizers to increase the nitrogen in your soil. Testing the pH of your soil can easily be done with a soil testing kit or a pH meter.
- 9) Aerate your lawn if the soil is compacted or has high clay content, which is common in the southwest. You can also add compost or grass clippings that will lighten your soil. Turf grasses generally decline in a heavily compacted soil.
- 10) Take out existing lawn areas and replace with xeric plantings of trees, shrubs, and perennials. Low water landscapes use significantly less water and require less maintenance compared to turf grass. Xeriscaping your home landscape can create dynamic and colorful spaces to enjoy, and can also increase the value of your home. Durango Nursery specializes in xeriscaping, and has many publications to assist gardeners in creating xeric landscape areas. We also feature xeriscaping on our website at www.durangonursery.com. Our nursery is stocked with an excellent selection of xeric trees, shrubs, and perennials. We hope to see you there!

References

“Natural Lawn Care” Eartheasy. Web. 14 April 2010.

“Organic Lawn Care for the Cheap and Easy”. Richsoil. Web. 14 April 2010.

“The Grass is Greener and Safer”. Organic Lawn Care 101. Web. 14 April 2010.

