

# Creating a Healthy Yard



## Organic

## VS

## Synthetic

- Packaged ingredients clearly visible.
- Made of coarse materials, does not run off easily.
- Increases soil porosity, allowing rainwater to percolate into the soil.
- Works to build healthy soils, full of microbes, which feed plants and loosen soil.
- Composed of materials found in nature – decomposed matter, plant extracts, minerals.

- Packaged ingredients rarely divulged.
- Highly water soluble, easily washed away.
- Increases soil compaction, because fewer microbes are available to loosen the soil.
- No microbes in soil to feed plants.
- Composed in part by man-made chemicals, often including known toxins and carcinogens.

## Get your lawn off drugs!

### Organic is the healthy way to go!

Commercial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides are like fast food - they fill you up and taste good, but hurt your health. That's the same with synthetic lawn care products, which rob the soil of vital nutrients and microbes, requiring more and more applications of fertilizers and chemicals to compensate.

### Healthy soils make healthy grass... it's as simple as that!

The concept of going organic is all about creating healthy soils that have the right nutrients and ph, which will encourage robust grass growth through long, strong roots. FACT: Grass will outcompete weeds if given the right soil conditions!

#### Going organic how to:

- 1. Go cold turkey** - Don't make a slow transition. Organic is about creating healthy soil to nurture plant growth - synthetic is about stimulating plant growth above ground. They are not compatible.
- 2. Get your soil tested** - This is imperative, because you must know your soil's deficiencies, including ph levels to provide the right soil conditions for healthy root growth. Go to <http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/> to get information about the UMass Extension's soil test, which is comprehensive and very inexpensive!
- 3. Add the soil amendments** that the test results suggest.
- 4. Top dress with compost** - Put 1/2" of compost on your lawn. Compost provides organic matter, teeming with microbes that will make the soil more porous and nutri-ent-rich.



**5. Overseed** in the spring and the fall. Mowing does not let grasses form the seed heads necessary for them to self-sow, which is why overseeding is important. When overseeding, use a blend of fescues, which grow deep roots and are very drought tolerant.

**6. Spray compost tea** on your lawn once a month during the growing season. You can make your own or you can buy liquid or dehydrated compost tea at many nurseries.

**7. Apply organic fertilizer** in the fall. Organic fertilizer is much coarser and less soluble than synthetic fertilizer, so it tends to stay put.

### The end result - a beautiful, healthy yard