

Organic Accredited Land Care Professionals in Middlesex County

(from Northeast Organic Farming Association)

Mark Babineau B&B Landscaping, LLC 860-267-1972	860-873-1128 John Ockasi Johnny Organic 203-630-9687
Lauren Glazier Town and Country Nurseries 860-345-8581	Pamela Quayle The Herb Gatherer 860-345-2631
Jos Konst Festiva Gardens 860-526-5284	Joann Thompson Rivers Edge Gardening 860-349-0186
Roger McNelly East Haddam Horticultural Services	Barbara Yaeger B.Yaeger, LLC 203-318-5015

Lawncare Product Catalogs:

www.extremelygreen.com/
www.GardensAlive.com
www.planetnatural.com

Additional Resources:

www.beyondpesticides.org
www.ctNOFA.org
www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/el.n.html
www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal
www.ehhi.org
www.epa.gov/pesticides
www.grassrootsinfo.org
www.healthylawns.org
www.organiclandcare.net
www.panna.org
www.pesticideinfo.org
www.watoxics.org

For more information about Project Green Lawn

Contact Kim O'Rourke, Middletown Recycling Coordinator at 344-3526 or find information at the City website cityofmiddletown.com (go to the **Current Events** link).

Project GREEN LAWN

*Healthy lawns
for a healthy community!*



Chem-free Lawns



Project Green Lawn

Project Green Lawn is a City of Middletown public awareness campaign to encourage residents and businesses to maintain healthy, lush lawns free of chemicals that are harmful to people, pets and the environment.

Learn How to Maintain a Healthy Lawn

This brochure includes strategies for maintaining a chemical-free lawn, a list of local organic landscapers, and other resources. A more detailed information packet is also available from the City.



**Chem-free
Lawn**

Sign the Pledge

Sign the pledge to keep a chemical-free lawn! Every resident who pledges will be entered in a raffle for great prizes donated by local businesses. You can also post a colorful sign, declaring your lawn "chem-free."

Kids—Collect Pledges, Win Prizes

Children are the ones most affected by harmful lawn care chemicals. Middletown kids can be involved in Project Green Lawn by getting lawn owners in Middletown—friends, neighbors, family—to sign Green Lawn pledges. Those who collect the most pledges will win great prizes!

Details and pledge forms can be obtained from the Recycling Office (344-3526) or the City website, www.cityofmiddletown.com (go to the **Current Events** link).

Why Chem-Free?—The Health Hazards of Lawn Care Chemicals

Lawns maintained with synthetic fertilizers and pesticides pose a serious health threat to people, pets and the environment.

Lawn care chemicals, applied by homeowners or companies, contain potent toxins that kills weeds and pests. Scientific evidence shows that these chemicals also affect people, especially children, and pets.



Exposure to certain lawn care pesticides has been associated with increased risk of asthma, several types of childhood and adult cancers, birth defects, reproductive problems, nervous and immune system disorders, and liver and kidney damage.

Research reported by the National Institutes of Health indicates that children may be particularly sensitive to the cancer-causing effects of pesticides. And, dogs whose owners use a popular lawn care chemical found in most "weed and feed" products were twice as likely to contract cancer, according to a National Cancer Institute study.

Lawn chemicals also make their way into the environment through rain runoff and are passed along through the food chain, contaminating fish and wildlife. Many Canadian towns have banned use of pesticides on private lawns due to health and environmental concerns.

You decide—are all of the risks associated with lawn care chemicals worth it, especially when safe alternatives exist?

How to Have a Healthy Lawn Without Harmful Chemicals

Fortunately, there are Chem-Free strategies for a truly Green Lawn—a lawn maintained without synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Your lawn can look well-kept without putting your family's and community's health at risk.

DO IT YOURSELF:

1. Mow High: Set your mower to 3 inches. Short grass and over watering promote shallow root growth, weeds and thatch. Leave the grass



clippings on the lawn—this provides at least 40% of the nutrients your lawn needs.

2. Fertilize, as needed, with a slow release 100% organic fertilizer such as seaweed compost, bone meal, or blood meal in the spring and late summer. Compost or fresh compost tea will also help correct the soil's biological balance.

3. Aerate your lawn twice a year with lawn aerator shoes or an aerator. Soil compaction is one of the largest causes of weed problems. Aerating, or removing small plugs of soil, allows air, water and nutrients to reach the roots of the grass.

4. De-thatch: Thatch is a dense layer of grass stems and roots on the soil surface. When thatch is 1/2" or more, it can prevent roots from establishing, making grass susceptible to insects and disease. Reduce thatch by aerating, top-dressing with organic matter, or power raking.

5. Reseed your lawn every spring or fall with a certified first class grass seed compatible with the growing conditions in your yard. Seeding grass in established lawns can reduce weed problems.

6. Water only when needed, and avoid frequent, shallow watering, which encourages Japanese beetle grub infestation, fungus and root rot. Once a healthy lawn is established, water only after seeding.



7. Test your soil health every 3-5 years. The CT Agricultural Experiment Station provides free soil analysis for CT residents (www.caes.state.ct.us/Soiloffice/soiltesting.htm).

8. Adjust pH: Ideal lawn pH is 6.3-6.8. For low pH (high acidity) add ground limestone. For high pH (high alkalinity) add sulphur. One sign of high pH is a dandelion infestation.

QUICK & EASY!

Make the switch to an organic lawn care service. See the back of this brochure for some lawn care professionals!

Lawn Alternatives: Ground Covers, Flower Beds, Trees and Shrubs

Try growing a variety of plants and promote a healthy, diverse ecosystem in your yard.

1. Plant groupings of trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers that are compatible with each other and the existing environmental conditions (e.g. sunlight, soil and water).
2. Select insect or disease-resistant plant varieties.
3. Choose native plants adapted to our climate and conditions. Check out the CT River Coastal Conservation District plant sale each spring for a variety of CT natives.
4. Use ground covers that require less maintenance than grass and may be more suitable for the site's conditions.

Weeds and Pests: Non-Toxic Treatments

Using herbicides and pesticides to tackle weeds and pests can actually damage your lawn. These poisons also kill good organisms that help produce nutrients plants need to grow. This weakens the grass, fosters thatch and encourages diseases.

There are many safe, nontoxic alternatives for getting rid of common weeds and insects. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Dandelions: Pull them out when at their weakest—when they're blooming—by digging out 4-5 inches of the root. This may have to be done a few times throughout the season. Be sure to at least pluck the flowers before they go to seed.

2. Crabgrass can be eliminated by high mowing and use of organic fertilizers. Healthy grass growth will crowd out the crabgrass.

3. Weeds in driveway or sidewalk cracks can be controlled by treating with white vinegar.

4. Grubs can be controlled with beneficial nematodes (natural microscopic parasites) which are sold as a variety of products. Neem, a spray made from an extract of the Indian Neem tree, is also effective against grubs. (sold as Margosan-O, BioNeem or Scanmask)



5. Japanese beetles: Hand pick as many beetles as you can and drop them in a bucket of soapy water. Milky Spore can also be used to control Japanese and Oriental Beetle grubs.



Re-defining Weeds

What is a weed? Until the 1950s, clover was included in lawn seed mixes for its soft texture and ability to contribute nitrogen to the soil. Then the American lawn industry began promoting pesticide use and encouraged the public to view clover as a weed. Many plants considered weeds—such as Veronica and violets—are actually listed in wild-flower books.

If your lawn looks green, and most importantly, is a healthy place for your children and pets to play, can you re-think your definition of "weed"?

What More Can You Do?

Are you concerned about others who use lawn care chemicals in your neighborhood or community?

- Get more involved in the Project Green Lawn campaign by contacting Kim O'Rourke, Middletown's Recycling Coordinator at 344-3526.
- Talk to people about the harmful effects of using pesticides—both on private property and in public areas like playing fields
- Register with the state Pesticide Registry for advance warning of nearby spraying (www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/pesticides).

Project Green Lawn is a project of the City of Middletown Public Works Department, Recycling Advisory Committee, and Conservation Commission, with support and assistance from the CT River Coastal Conservation District and The Jonah Center.

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